

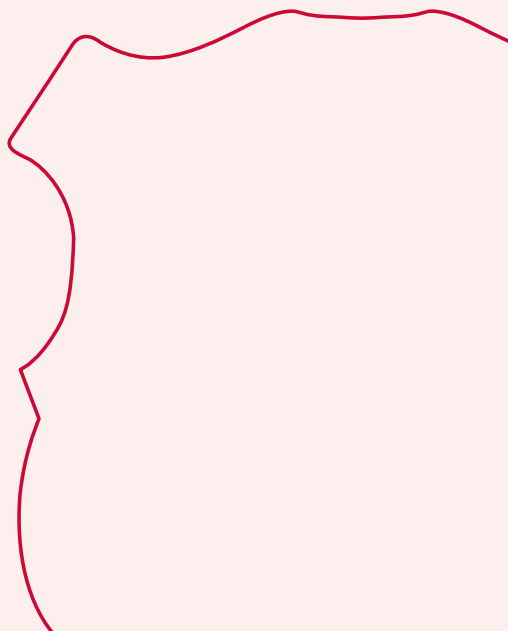


L-Università
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CENTRE FOR LABOUR STUDIES

BIENNIAL REPORT

2023 - 2024





Published in April 2025

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Design and Layout: Outlook Coop

The ideas expressed in this report represent the views of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Malta, the Centre for Labour Studies, or the Centre's Board.

ISBN: 978-9918-0-1121-6

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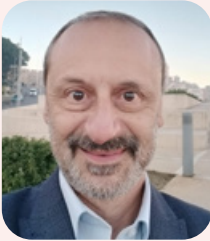
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INTRODUCTION



**PROFESSOR
GODFREY BALDACCHINO**

Chair, Centre for Labour Studies

This latest *Biennial Report* of the Centre for Labour Studies covers the activities of the CLS over the period January 2023 to December 2024. The oldest centre or institute at the University of Malta, the CLS continues to offer a slate of teaching, advocacy and research services, inspired by a concern for participatory learning, a pursuit of adult and worker education, and a focus on labour and industrial relations, human resources management and development, gender at work, career guidance as well as occupational safety and health. In recent years, the CLS' longstanding interests have been augmented by a research and policy focus on migrant workers and the 'gig' economy.

Such an addition to the slate of concerns addressed by the CLS was inevitable: Malta's labour market has been dramatically convulsed in recent years. An unprecedented period of full employment (and with unemployment hovering at historical lows) and strong economic performance in many sectors has led to an insatiable demand for labour. This could only be met by significant flows of (mostly male) immigrant workers. These phenomena have contorted the Maltese workplace, and reshaped Maltese society. From child care centres to senior homes, from food delivery agencies to restaurant waiting staff, foreign workers

provide services to Maltese clients, to visiting tourists, and to other foreign workers: bemused visitors cannot be faulted for sometimes wondering: “but, where are the locals?”

The labour and social ramifications of economic growth and migrant flows are significant and deserve scrutiny and research focus. The participation rate of Maltese women in the labour market has doubled in just over 30 years; while the number of children born to Maltese parents has plummeted. Industrial practices and materials – such as those involved in the buoyant construction industry – have changed, incorporating techniques and procedures brought over by foreign workers. The resort to collective bargaining in the Maltese private sector has fallen to record lows. New industries are emerging, with Artificial Intelligence heralding what could be a radical shift in the quality and quantity of employment. The elusive ‘work-life’ balance has improved; but much more remains to be done.

The CLS has been monitoring and mentoring on such work-related developments since 1981. At the University of Malta (UM), it has pioneered the introduction of university-level qualifications for adult learners, primarily workers, but also female home makers.

I invite you to consider the achievements of the CLS in the 24 months under review in this *2023-24 Biennial Report*, and to reflect on the arguments contained in the academic papers being proposed by the CLS academic staff.

I thank CLS Director Dr Luke Fiorini; full-time academic staff members Prof. Anna Borg and Prof. Manuel Debono; Prof Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone (Research Support Officer); the administrative team of Ms Josephine Agius, Ms Alessia Zahra and Ms Elisa Kelly Caruana; and the part-time lecturing and research staff who support our teaching and research efforts; for their passion, commitment and engagement in their work.

In the period under review, we were all shocked by the passing of our longtime colleague and friend Professor Ronald Sultana, on November 24th 2023. Prof. Sultana had been instrumental in developing the Master’s programme in guidance and career counselling, which the CLS has been running at UM in collaboration with the Faculty of Education. His deep humanity was reflected in his pedagogy, and the CLS staff and students benefited so much from his calm and endearing teaching techniques. Ronald: you are sorely missed; but your legacy lives on.

FOREWORD



DR LUKE A. FIORINI

Director, Centre for Labour Studies

Welcome to the Biennial Report 2023–2024. Since 1990, the Centre for Labour Studies (CLS) has published a publicly available biennial report, having previously issued an annual report since 1981. This latest edition highlights the dedicated work of the Centre’s staff throughout 2023 and 2024.

As has become tradition, the report opens with articles contributed by CLS academic and research staff. These articles address timely and nationally relevant challenges, including an analysis of industrial relations in Malta, the role of trade unions in safeguarding migrant workers, the impact of caregiving and household responsibilities on fertility decisions, precarious work in Malta’s higher education sector, and a review of work-related mental health and well-being in Malta.

At the core of the CLS’s mission is its commitment to higher education. During the period under review, the Centre continued to offer four well-established part-time programmes of studies: the Diploma in Gender, Work, and Society (in collaboration with the Faculty for Social Well-being); the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Hons) (in collaboration with the Faculty of Economics, Management, and Accountancy); the

Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons); and the Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development (together with the Faculty of Education). Despite an extensive marketing campaign, the CLS faced challenges in attracting sufficient applicants to reopen the diploma and master's programmes, prompting an exploration of innovative approaches to revitalise them. Additionally, local and international competition has affected enrolment in the Centre's two flagship bachelor's degrees, necessitating a strategic review of educational offerings. Nevertheless, during 2023 and 2024, the CLS provided education to eleven distinct cohorts of students. Notably, in the academic year 2024/25, the Centre introduced the Master of Science in Work and Organisational Behaviour (by research), which saw an overwhelming number of applicants, exceeding available resources—a testament to the CLS's commitment to academic innovation.

The period under review also saw several changes in the CLS's leadership and staff complement. The team grew in February 2023 when Dr Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone joined as a Research Support Officer. Krista has been a pleasure to work with and her impact is evident within this edition of the Biennial. In November 2023, the CLS welcomed back Professor Godfrey Baldacchino as Chair. A name synonymous with the Centre and Labour Studies, Professor Baldacchino's return was met with great enthusiasm by the entire staff. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to Professor Tanya Sammut Bonnici for her leadership as CLS Chair from July 2021 to November 2023. The month of November 2023 also marked the departure of Ms Stephanie Muscat, who had served as an administrator at the CLS for well over a decade. During her time at the Centre, Stephanie grew both academically and professionally, carrying out her work with diligence and dedication. However, every ending brings a new beginning, and the CLS was pleased to welcome Ms Elisa Kelly Caruana to the team. A particularly noteworthy staff milestone was achieved in September 2023, when Anna Borg was promoted to Associate Professor—an outstanding and well-deserved accomplishment.

A significant portion of this Biennial Report is dedicated to celebrating the Centre's achievements over the past two years. One section details the scholarly contributions of CLS academic and research staff, reflecting

the Centre's strategic commitment to maximising research output. This edition lists approximately 60 diverse publications, including peer-reviewed studies, book chapters, and reports for national and international bodies—an impressive accomplishment given the Centre's limited resources. Some of these publications stem from the CLS's role as part of Eurofound's Network of European Correspondents, further reinforcing the Centre's research impact.

Another key focus of this report is the CLS's outreach efforts, a fundamental pillar of its strategic plan. This section highlights a wide array of events organised by the Centre, collaborative projects, and staff participation in national and international conferences. Among the notable achievements during the period under review, the CLS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the VSB Technical University of Ostrava, Czech Republic, fostering international collaboration. A tangible outcome of this partnership is the Centre's involvement in COLOSH, an Erasmus+ project aimed at enhancing institutions' readiness for international digital health and safety learning. The CLS also signed an MoU with the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA), leading to concrete cooperation, including opportunities for health and safety students to accompany OHSA officers on inspections and increased engagement of CLS academics in OHSA events. Additionally, the Centre organised several events, including two international ones: an international conference on the history of work in collaboration with the Work in Progress Seminar Series (WIPSS), and an event for European experts in worker participation in collaboration with the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI).

Despite these academic and institutional achievements, the period under review was marked by a profound loss for the CLS community. The sudden passing of Professor Ronald Sultana on 24 November 2023 was deeply felt by all who had the privilege of working with him. Ronald played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Postgraduate Diploma and, later, the Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development. In this edition of the Biennial Report, Professor Manwel Debono, who worked closely with him for many years, reflects on Ronald's invaluable contributions to the CLS and his lasting impact on career guidance in Malta. I encourage all readers to reflect on the remarkable legacy he leaves behind.

Looking ahead, the CLS has several projects in the pipeline. In terms of educational offerings, its undergraduate courses will be reviewed, with consideration given to meeting the current market needs of human resources and occupational health and safety practitioners. On the research front, the CLS will collaborate with the National Skills Council (NSC) to identify the skill requirements of Human Resource and Career Guidance practitioners. The ongoing partnership with the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA) is also expected to expand to include research collaboration. Additionally, research on the challenges faced by migrant workers in Malta is set to be published in 2025, with the CLS actively contributing to public discourse on the topic. The Centre also intends to continue exploring international opportunities for collaboration.

The CLS has been advocating for increased physical and human resources; however, progress in this area has been limited. Efforts to secure additional support will remain a priority. Meanwhile, academic staff will have the opportunity to enhance their skills and expand their professional networks through the COLOSH project. The CLS will also continue to promote its research and share its expertise by organising relevant events and engaging in outreach activities.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues and friends, including the administrative members of staff, researchers, and lecturers contributing to the CLS. This publication is a testament to their hard work and dedication. While the workload was often demanding, the strong relationships within the team made the experience both rewarding and fulfilling. I look forward to the next two years with enthusiasm.

A special thanks also goes to Ms Alessia Zahra for her invaluable assistance in compiling this Biennial Report.

January, 2025

SECTION 3

ARTICLES





**PROFESSOR
GODFREY BALDACCHINO**

Chair, Centre for Labour Studies

The state of industrial relations in Malta:

A critical commentary

ABSTRACT

Social partnership at national level is alive and well; but trade unions are struggling for relevance in the sprawling Maltese private sector. Just 36% of all workers in Malta in 2020 were trade union members, and most of these are employed in the public sector. The percentage of private sector employees covered by a collective agreement has fallen from 33% in 1995 to 27% in 2008 and to 13% in 2022. The number of collective agreements in force in the Maltese private sector stood at around 130 in 2022; it had been 212 in 1995 and 168 in 2008.

Four policy measures are proposed to halt, or even revise, trade union decline: (1) to encourage industry-wide, and therefore multi-employer, collective bargaining; (2) to consider compulsory trade union membership (with suitable opt-out provisions); (3) to extend the right to negotiate to multiple unions and/or to a trade union with a worker membership below the 50% threshold; and (4) to transform Wage Regulation Orders into Sectoral Collective Agreements.

INTRODUCTION

According to the European Minimum Wage (EMW) Directive, all European Union member states are now obliged to protect and promote collective bargaining; and, where collective bargaining coverage is below 80% (as in Malta), these states are mandated to draw up and implement national action plans to increase coverage (European Commission, 2022). This situation serves as the backdrop to this paper, which offers a timely critical commentary on the state of industrial relations in Malta.

SITUATION

Malta's labour force has doubled within one generation: from 130,000 in 1991-2 to 260,000 in early 2020 (Baldacchino and Debono, 2021, p. 15). Has trade union membership kept pace with this expansion in the size of the labour force? No. It has not.

In 1992, there were around 74,000 trade union members, as reported by the trade union organisations, according to the published report by the Registrar of Trade Unions (DIER, 1994). These included 3,700 pensioner members of the General Workers' Union (GWU), bringing down the number of trade union members still in employment to around 70,300. That translates into a trade union density of around 54%: *just over one half* of all workers in Malta in 1992 had then been declared to be trade union members.

Twenty eight years later, 106,800 trade union members have been declared by the trade union organisations for the year 2020, according to the same annual source (DIER, 2022). Of these, at least 12,700 are pensioner-members of the GWU or the Unjon Haddiema Magħqudin (Union of United Workers, UHM), and therefore not part of the active labour supply. This brings down the total number of trade union members in employment to around 94,100. That translates into a trade union density of around 36%: *just over one third* of all workers in Malta in 2020 have been declared to be trade union members. And so while the labour force doubled – an increase of 100% – within this 28-year span, the number of trade union members still economically active (as labour supply) increased by only 23,800, or 34%. In other words, for the period under review (1992-2020), for every three new workers joining the Malta

labour market, only one joined a trade union. The other two new workers did not. Let us also remind ourselves that these are statistics provided to the Department of Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER) by the trade unions themselves.

REASONS FOR TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP DECLINE

Explanations for this relative decline in trade union membership abound. A common fallacy is that the large relative increase of women in the formal labour market – the female participation rate in Malta almost doubled in the period under review, from 32 to 60% (Rapa, 2019) – has dampened trade union membership because allegedly most trade unions have been unable to attract as many women as men to join and become active as members. But this has not been the case in Malta: based on membership statistics that discriminate by gender, trade union male members outnumbered female trade union members 4:1 in 1992; the ratio had gone *down*, to 1.5:1 by 2020. There are some 46,000 women in the Malta labour market today who are trade union members (and including thousands of teachers, nurses, doctors and civil servants).

What are likely to be the two most powerful and inter-related explanatory variables to contemporary trade union decline are the dramatic increase in economic migrants and a creeping culture of individualism. There are over 100,000 migrants in the Malta labour market, from well-paid Northern European executives in the gaming sector to Sub-Saharan African garbage collectors. What they share is a reticence to join trade unions: perhaps out of a cocky disposition to negotiate their own working conditions; a general deference and submission to managerial authority; as well as a fear and hesitation to not join trade unions in order not to incur the wrath and displeasure of their boss (in spite of constitutional guarantees in favour of the freedom of association). “With migrant workers becoming the ‘new normal’ in Malta, the future of local trade unions may increasingly depend on their [trade unions’] ability to appeal to such an occupational category” (Baldacchino, 2019). Additionally, more sophisticated human resource management practitioners deploying ‘open door’ communication policies seek to maintain harmonious labour

relations and to extinguish moves and initiatives towards collective consciousness or the mobilisation of discontent amongst their workforce.

COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT COVERAGE

Meanwhile, something else has been happening to trade union membership trends, and which is not well captured in the annual reports by the Registrar of Trade Unions (RTU).

With the entry into force of Directive 2022/2041 of the European Parliament and of the European Council of 19 October 2022 on adequate minimum wages in the European Union (EU) – also known as the European Minimum Wage (EMW) Directive – all EU members states are now obliged to protect and promote collective bargaining; and, where collective bargaining coverage is below 80% (as in Malta), these same states are mandated to draw up and implement national action plans to increase coverage (European Commission, 2022).

Malta's tradition of industrial relations has been inspired by enterprise-level collective bargaining in limited parts of the private sector (mainly manufacturing, commercial banks, large hotels, some schools) and almost comprehensive national-level bargaining in the public sector (which includes the civil service, state schools, state hospitals, and all other agencies and authorities where government has a controlling interest or which are paid for from public funds). This leaves a sprawling private sector – composed mainly of: sectors with hardly any trade union representation (such as e-gaming, construction and insurance); small and family-owned businesses; and a considerable 'gig economy' with large pools of migrant and female labour – that remains almost totally non-unionised and not covered by collective bargaining. For example, Gozo, with its absence of large private sector firms and strong family business tradition, is likely not to have *any* private sector collective agreements in force.

An internal report drawn up by the DIER in September 2023 has identified that the percentage of employees (public and private sectors combined) in Malta covered by a collective agreement was around 31% as of 2022: one of the lowest in Europe (DIER, 2023, p.12). In order to address its obligations as expressed in the EMW Directive, the DIER is meant to

address this situation, such that at least 80% of employees are covered and protected by collective bargaining. Roughly, that means *adding some 130,000 workers to those already covered by collective agreements*. That number is more than the current total number of workers in Malta who are trade union members.

There is no official, published data relating to the number or percentage of employees covered by collective agreements, resulting from collective bargaining, in Malta. As mandated by law, the RTU annual reports display trade union membership figures as provided by the individual trade unions, and which are occasionally checked via a verification exercise. But: (1) such statistics largely fail to discriminate between public and private sector employees; (2) the reported trade union members may not be workers, since by law a trade union need only have workers constituting a *majority* of its members; (3) just because someone is a trade union member does not necessarily mean that their conditions of employment are covered by a collective agreement; and (4) the data may disguise multiple union membership, since an undisclosed number of workers are members of more than one trade union. Meanwhile, (5) the ‘free rider effect’ comes into play: many workers are not trade union members and yet they can still benefit from the provisions of a collective agreement, once in force, since the conditions of work of *all* the workers that fall within the ambit of a collective agreement are impacted by such an agreement, irrespective of whether they are trade union members or non-members.

RECENT HISTORICAL TRENDS

Peak trade union membership (as a percentage of workers in employment) in Malta was secured in the 1980s. A labour-intensive manufacturing sector fuelled by foreign investment and technology – principally in textiles, garments, shoes, rubber and plastic, all meant for export – had quickly expanded after a sequence of six national Development Plans were put into operation, over 1959-1988 (Baldacchino, 1988; Sklair, 2002). This developed an industrial proletariat in Malta, including waged women for the first time, which quickly developed a mass, collective consciousness that was ripe for trade union affiliation. Indeed, manufacturing remains

by the far the industrial segment within the Malta private sector with the largest density and number of extant collective agreements. Additionally, the two general trade unions in Malta – the GWU and the UHM – became embroiled in partisan politics, with the Malta Labour Party encouraging workers to join the ‘largest / strongest’ union (the GWU), while the Nationalist Party exhorted workers to stay away from the ‘toothless’ trade union – referring mainly to the implications of the statutory merger of the GWU to the MLP, 1978-1992 – and instead join the ‘free’ unions under the aegis of the Confederation of Maltese Trade Unions (CMTU), of which the UHM was the largest constituent member by far. This rivalry and tension probably led to increases in trade union membership, from which both the GWU and the UHM have benefitted; and also to a wave of resorts to dual union membership, with workers deciding to hedge their bets, seeking security from both major unions, arguing that one union would be relatively close to the government of the day (and therefore more accommodating, but possibly more able to secure benefits for its members); and the other stridently in opposition (and therefore more aggressive, determined and resolute in its pursuit of worker demands).

These dynamics are now history. Manufacturing has held steady in the Maltese economy, but is responsible for much less employment than 40 years ago. The political parties no longer urge workers, subtly or otherwise, to join *any* trade union. We have already commented on how the labour force had also doubled within 28 years – 1992 to 2020 – and most of the increase has been in the service and professional sectors. The former is traditionally not fertile ground for trade union recruitment or mobilisation; but the latter has mainly bolstered the ranks of the *Forum Unjoni Maltin* (FORUM), with 12 affiliate unions, where teachers, university lecturers and nurses are now organised. Indeed, as evidence of this, and as noted above, the number of trade union members, as reported by the reports of the Registrar of Trade Unions, *grew but did not double*, failing to keep step so as to maintain the same level of representation: from 70,300 in 1992/3 to 94,100 in 2022/23. An ideology of neoliberalism has become more mainstream, with many more (and especially young) workers adamant that they and they alone should be responsible for securing their own conditions of work after discussing with their employer, ‘eyeball to eyeball’. Moreover, a significant proportion of the labour force now

includes immigrant labour and who – whether European Union or Third Country Nationals – do not generally come with a strong trade union culture or disposition. Many Asian workers, for example, such as Indians, Nepalis and Filipinos, come from more patriarchal, deferential and non-confrontational cultures. They may consider trade unions as Maltese-run, alien structures in which they do not and should not belong... or worse: they might fear that local trade unions are just different mechanisms used by government to control them. What still exists since the 1980s is a keen rivalry between the GWU and the UHM, the only two general, ‘catch all’ trade unions in Malta.

THE PUBLIC SECTOR

What we *do* know about collective bargaining is that *almost all* employees in the public sector (which includes the public service, public corporations and authorities, and companies where government is the majority shareholder) benefit from the outcome of collective bargaining. One consequence of this are the sector-wide collective agreements, with each typically remaining valid for a longer period of time than the agreements in the private sector. The collective agreement for around 30,000 employees in the public service that has just expired was valid for the period 2017-2024 (Grech, 2017). The most recent agreement, with a six-year span, was signed into force in November 2024 (Agius, 2024). Civil servants, doctors and paramedics, nurses, architects and civil engineers, teachers and professional psychologists in the public sector benefit from such an agreement, signed between the Principal Permanent Secretary (the Executive Head of the Public Service) and the representatives of ten trade unions representing these grades (and including the GWU and UHM). Additionally, separate negotiations are held with the various agencies, authorities and public bodies, leading to some 60 additional, tailor-made, collective agreements for their staff complement. Practically the whole public sector is thus covered (with the exception of MITA: the Malta Information Technology Agency). *Collective bargaining coverage in the public sector is thus around 98-99%* (see also Greenland, 2011).

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The situation is very different in the private sector. Two separate studies were conducted to measure the extent of collective bargaining coverage in the Maltese private sector, one in 1995 and the other in 2008. In both cases, the various trade unions were each asked to provide a list of those firms with which they had a collective agreement governing the conditions of work of all or part of the labour force. The actual number of employees covered in such firms – or parts thereof, in the case of collective agreements covering specific occupational segments only – was then obtained or interpolated from trade and economic statistics; and which could be confirmed by individual employers. According to these studies, *the percentage of collective bargaining coverage in the Maltese private sector had fallen, from around 33% in 1995 to 27% in 2008* (Baldacchino, 1996; Baldacchino & Gatt, 2009).

In 2023, the DIER undertook an internal exercise to determine collective bargaining coverage, as part of the background data compilation necessary to plan for the consequences of the EMW Directive. As an outcome of this exercise, *the percentage of collective bargaining coverage in the Maltese private sector was calculated at around 13% (based on 2022 data)*. This would constitute a very steep drop in private sector trade union coverage over recent years: *a halving of trade union coverage in Malta's private sector within just 14 years (2008-2022)* (DIER, 2023).

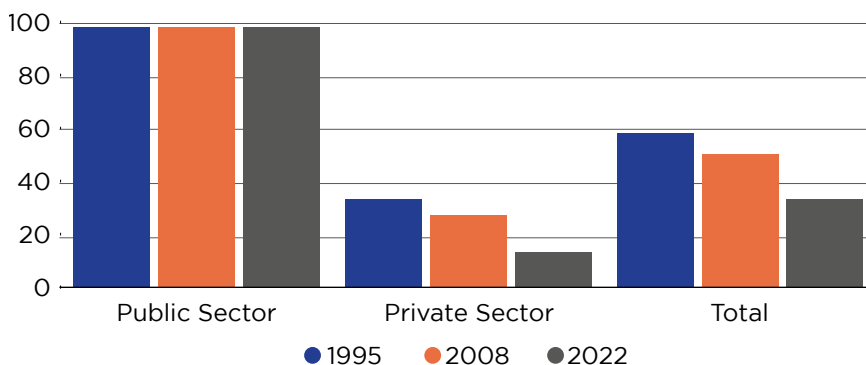


Figure 1: Percentage (%) of employees covered by a collective agreement in Malta (various years).

As expected, the number of collective agreements in force in the private sector manifests a slide similar to that of trade union membership in the same sector. In Spring 1995, there were some 158 collective agreements in force in the private sector that had been entered into by the GWU; 42 by the UHM; and 12 others by all the remaining trade unions (such as the Malta Union of Teachers), for a total of 212. The number of collective agreements in force in the private sector according to the 2008 study dropped to 168. Based on the recent DIER (2023) exercise, the number of collective agreements in the Maltese private sector has dropped further, and stood at 130 in 2022.

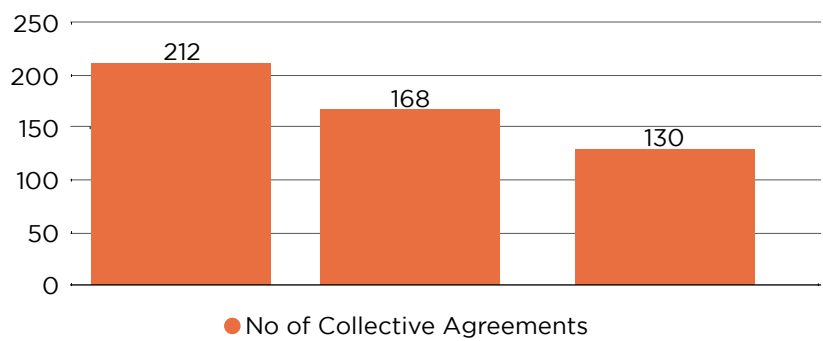


Figure 2: Number of Collective Agreements in force in the Malta Private Sector: 1995, 2008, 2022.

How, then, to address this situation, halt the decline in trade union presence and operations in the private sectors and expand collective agreement coverage towards the elusive 80% benchmark? Four policy measures are proposed.

FOUR POLICY MEASURES TO ENHANCE TRADE UNION COVERAGE IN MALTA

Trade unions in Malta, as in other countries across the globe, face the challenge of maintaining and increasing membership levels. The basis for working out trade union membership – and therefore the right towards official recognition and representation for the purposes of collective

bargaining – is fraught with controversy, and some creative practices. Some trade unions make it hard for members to resign; others continue to consider workers to have remained their members even after they have stopped paying their membership dues over many years: they would be asked to pay their ‘arrears’ should they wish to ‘re-join’ their union again or solicit its support on their behalf. Some unions, such as the GWU and the UHM, also include retired workers as their members, thereby augmenting their membership figures beyond the gainfully occupied population.

There are at least four policy measures that can transform the local industrial relations landscape in ways that could stem, or even revise, trade union decline and which should generally prove beneficial towards enhancing trade union coverage in the private sector. Some will require protracted negotiations between the social partners at national level, and the outcome of such discussions is not assured. The first policy measure is to encourage industry-wide, and therefore multi-employer, collective bargaining. The second is to consider compulsory trade union membership (with suitable opt-out provisions). The third is to extend the right to negotiate to multiple unions and/or to a trade union with a worker membership below the 50% threshold. The fourth is to transform Wage Regulation Orders into Sectoral Collective Agreements (Baldacchino & Debono, 2024). Each of these options is reviewed below.

Multi-employer (industry-wide) bargaining

Looking at the practices in other countries, it is clear that one way of extending trade union coverage to many more workers is via multi-employer bargaining, with the resulting agreements covering workers engaged in whole industries (such as chemical, printing or pharmaceutical industries). In this way, employers in the same sector settle for similar conditions of employment, reducing the temptation and opportunity of staff poaching or of staff turnover, leaving in search of better conditions. The practice also rewards industry-wide competitiveness, implicitly favouring the most profitable firms and punishing the less profitable ones in each sector.

In Malta, multi-employer bargaining is not popular or widely known; nor is it part of the policy agenda of either local employers or trade unions. We

know of only one collective bargaining agreement that involved multiple employers: namely, car import companies. This agreement, signed by the General Workers' Union and five car-import firms, expired in 2004 and appears not to have been renewed (Debono, 2016; Debono & Farrugia, 2008). The two largest trade unions – the GWU and the UHM – both have various 'sections' that operate as sectoral trade unions on their own right with a considerable degree of autonomy: (GWU has 7; UHM has 5). Their insider knowledge of, and oversight over, specific industrial sectors, in both public and public sectors, allows them to benchmark bargaining for pay and other working conditions. As the only two general (catch all) unions in Malta, the GWU and UHM sign over 90% of all collective agreements, and "their pressure for extensions and precedents, from one catchment group or industry to another, leads to both 'pattern bargaining' and 'bargaining coordination' across industries" (Debono & Baldacchino, 2019, p. 432). Such an experience would be beneficial for future multi-employer collective bargaining.

From the employers' side, most of the large corporate sector is affiliated to the Malta Employers Association (MEA) which provides professional support to employer bargaining on a needs basis. The Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA) comes in second. Here too, it is easy for the MEA or the MHRA to offer advice that is grounded in national or sectoral developments and trends. The Malta Chamber of SMEs is another prominent organisation promoting and protecting business interests at a national level in Malta; and is also – like the MEA and MHRA – registered as an employers' association in accordance with the provisions of the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (EIRA, 2002), and therefore legally empowered to enter into collective bargaining.

Some multi-employer representation might exist, under the aegis of these few general and sectoral employer associations. However, such employer association(s) are not known to undertake any collective bargaining in their own name; they rather prefer to advise and counsel in such situations.

Compulsory trade union membership?

A few years ago, the GWU proposed an additional initiative to promote collective bargaining and trade union representation in Malta. This proposal draws some inspiration from the Austrian model where workers are, however, *not* obliged to join a trade union – only 26% do currently – but are compulsory members of the Chamber of Labour, which handles negotiations and trade disputes; most Austrian employers are, in turn, compulsory members of the Federal Economic Chamber (Glassner & Hoffman, 2023). The Malta proposal involves enrolling *all workers into a trade union as a basic right*, while also providing them with an opt-out option. In the event of opting out, their trade union membership dues would be directed towards a nation-wide worker education and training fund (Micallef, 2019). This proposal has been endorsed by the Labour Government that listed it in the 2022 Electoral Manifesto (Borg, 2022), and by the UHM which supports mandatory membership for low-income workers who are particularly vulnerable to exploitation (Micallef, 2022). The measure would be an effective foil to the considerable ‘free riding’ that is rife in the workplace: why bother to join a trade union when one benefits from the outcomes of collective bargaining anyway? It would be equivalent to the mandatory insurance that applies by law to all vehicle owners in Malta.

However, employers’ organisations – including the MEA, the Malta Chamber for Commerce, Enterprise and Industry (known as the Malta Chamber) and MHRA – have been vehemently and vocally against this proposal, presenting it as a ‘red line’ and arguing mainly that it would clash with the freedom of affiliation and representation which is a basic right (Agius, 2018). Paying trade union dues, or the equivalent, could also be interpreted as a new ‘tax’ on workers, if they have to fork out the money.

Notwithstanding the strong negative sentiment expressed by employers towards compulsory union membership, the fact that the government and the two largest trade unions are in favour of such an initiative may provide an added justification to pursue industrial / multi-employer collective bargaining, making it more likely to gain acceptance and effectiveness. The focus on mandatory trade union membership also aligns with the goals of multi-employer collective bargaining to ensure fair and equitable treatment for all workers.

Extending the right to negotiate to multiple unions and/ or to a trade union with a membership below the 50% threshold?

Another initiative, never formally endorsed but nevertheless practised in Malta, has been to enter into collective bargaining arrangements *even when the trade union representing most of the employees in a particular place of work lacks 'majority representation'* (50%+1 of the workers in the company, or distinct occupational category, as specified at law). Employers are not obliged by law to enter into discussion or negotiation with any trade union that does not meet the '50%+1' threshold – except to deal with individual cases. However, this has been a practice for some time, especially in the manufacturing sector in the late 1970s-early 1980s in Malta and where German management and investment is concerned (Baldacchino, 2009). It appears that, in some situations, employers prefer the familiar territory of collective bargaining even though the main trade union at the place of work could only command say 40-45% of employees as its members. In some cases, private sector management has *negotiated with two unions together* when their collective membership exceeded 50%+1, as permitted by the relevant industrial relations regulations. The willingness and disposition of at least some employers to engage in collective bargaining – even if the union membership threshold is not met – reflects a desire for inclusivity and stability in labour relations. This aligns with the goals of multi-employer collective bargaining, which aims to bring together multiple employers and trade unions to create a more comprehensive and stable bargaining framework.

Transform wage regulation orders into sectoral collective agreements?

Another practice, copied from the British tradition, is to have Wage Regulation Orders (WROs) governing the basic conditions of employment of *workers in non-unionised sectors* (e.g. cinema workers, sextons, cleaning staff, woodworkers). Almost all these Orders are some 50 years old and were the outcome of tripartite negotiations and discussions at national level, held by so-called Wages Councils (Grech, 2020). The Digital Platform Delivery Wages Council Wage Regulation Order (2022) is a rare recent addition to these orders. It was discussed within the

Employment Relations Board, a tripartite body coordinated by the Department of Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER, 2022). The use of Wage Regulation Orders to govern basic employment conditions in non-unionised sectors demonstrates a commitment by major social partners to ensuring fair working conditions even in industries with lower union presence. This inclusivity aligns with the goals of multi-employer collective bargaining, which seeks to bring together various employers and workers in sectors that might not necessarily have high levels of union representation.

It may thus be possible to transform WROs into sectoral agreements. In Ireland, similar Employment Regulation Orders (EROs) and Sectoral Employment Orders (SEOs) are already viewed as “quasi-collective agreements” because they result from processes involving both employers and employees (Maccarrone, Erne & Regan, 2019, pp. 317-8).

CONCLUSION

Collective bargaining has brought about a steady improvement in the working conditions of a large proportion of workers, in Malta as much as abroad, while sustaining a stable industrial relations climate in which competitive firms have generally prospered. In this way, investment is protected and good jobs are created and maintained: a win-win scenario that benefits workers as much as shareholders.

In Malta, as in various other countries, observing collective bargaining in the private and public sectors suggests a dual landscape. On one hand, almost all public sector employees are covered by collective agreements. Public sector management is regularly engaged in discussions, consultations and negotiations, as well as the occasional confrontations, with trade unions, notably the GWU and the UHM, but also noticeably the Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses (MUMN) and the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT). On the other hand, the private sector is increasingly struggling to maintain an industrial relations climate in which trade unions are seen as legitimate players. So much so that unions have been unable to stem the declining coverage of collective bargaining in the private sector. Their strongest presence, in manufacturing – a sector that is home to some 60 extant collective agreements – is probably one of the most

threatened by technological advances (such as digitalisation, robotisation and Artificial Intelligence) which can spell reductions in labour demand, leading to a still lower collective bargaining coverage. Meanwhile, the unions have been unable to infiltrate most emerging industries, like information technology, cryptocurrencies, bespoke financial services and gaming. It is no coincidence that the proportion of foreign workers in these new sectors is significant (Debono & Baldacchino, 2019). For such and similar reasons, a continued decline of trade union presence, and collective bargaining, in the Maltese private sector is forecast; unless corrective steps are taken. Adopting and implementing one or more policy measures (as suggested above), agreed to by government and the social partners at national level, would be an obvious consideration to somehow address a worrying decline.

DISCLAIMER

The author declares no conflict of interest in writing this article.

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Precarious work in Malta's public higher education sector

ABSTRACT

Precarity and job insecurity are increasing in Malta, and the higher education sector is no exception. This article focuses on precarious jobs in Malta's public higher education sector, considered in relation to the EU context more broadly. The article offers an initial mapping of the area through an overview of three aspects in particular: classification and numbers; unionisation; and gender distribution.

INTRODUCTION

Precarious work and job insecurity are internationally rampant across sectors (Chesters, 2024), leading to the emergence of the class of workers that Guy Standing (2011) has called the 'precarariat'; though this commodified labour force is not a new phenomenon nor does it historically centre exclusively on the so-called 'Global North' (Bonello & Wånggren, 2023, p. 1; Parry, 2018). There has however been an intensification of this state of affairs through neoliberal and marketisation policies. As noted by Debono (2018), 'atypical' contracts are on the rise in Malta while

permanent full-time jobs are decreasing, just as they are elsewhere (p. 50).

Higher education (HE) has emerged as one of the sectors most likely to employ precarious labour across different national contexts; in Ireland for example, academic employment conditions have been described as “some of the most precarious employment conditions in the Irish economy, particularly in the Irish public sector” (IFUT, 2023, p. 7). Yet Vatansever (2023, p. 1221) identifies an “underrepresentation of academic work in labour studies”. Research in the area has however seen a rapid increase in recent years, as the situation proliferates. The neoliberal university has taken root worldwide, including in Europe (see e.g. Ergül and Coşar, 2017; Berg et al., 2016; Arnaud et al, 2010; Pereira, 2017; Vatansever, 2023). This has spurred a marketised model of the university, where institutions compete for students globally, and individuals compete for academic jobs. Malta’s national university, the University of Malta (UM), and the vocational further and higher education college, the Malta College of Arts, Science, and Technology (MCAST), are state-funded and therefore not as vulnerable to market pressures as other higher education institutions. Yet UM and MCAST are not immune to such neoliberalisation. Recently for example, the university has come under pressure from a government minister to “generate income” (the Minister of Finance, in Borg, 2024), prompting a response from the academics’ union, the University of Malta Academic Staff Association (UMASA), defending government funding for university and state investment in education (see Meilak, 2024).

Permanent and secure jobs in HE are increasingly being replaced by precarious labour across the world – a situation that hinders career progression and academic freedom, and fragments the professional identity of those caught up in it. It also has a deleterious impact on personal wellbeing and quality of life (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Berg et al, 2016; Bonello & Wånggren, 2023). In several important ways, academic work may be said to be privileged – not least, because access to tertiary education remains unequal, although Malta has registered the second-highest percentage increase in enrolled students between 2016 and 2021 (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2024 p. 23). For example, despite student stipends, discrepancies in the uptake of HE persist in Malta in relation to geographical region and class (Borg, 2021, p. 245). However,

the awareness of relative privilege also risks reinforcing the narrative of academic work as “passion”-driven (Busso & Rivetti, 2014), making academic workers willing to take on precarious work at the expense of their health and wellbeing, casting it in the light of “hope labour” (Bonello & Wånggren, 2023, p. 82), carried out in the hope of “future employment opportunities”, as defined by Kuehn and Corrigan (2013).

My recent work has explored the situation in the UK (Bonello & Wånggren, 2023) and among researchers in Europe (Külcür et al, 2024), through collaborative qualitative studies. The latter article has been the fruit of work carried out by a group of researchers within the COST action VOICES.¹ A few respondents described their experiences trying to manage different precarious jobs, cutting across both research and teaching roles. One respondent teaching in higher education institutions (HEIs) in a non-ITC EU country, said that she has had “jobs in 4 different cities (more than 100 kilometres apart) and that has been challenging”; another precarious academic working in a research job said: “Precarity is built into the structure of research.”

This short preliminary piece is a further effort to add to this literature by beginning to map out some of the landscape of higher education in Malta, focusing on institutions in the public sector. Reference is made primarily to surrounding literature on European higher education, for the purpose of situating Malta comparatively, with reference to its European context.

CLASSIFICATION & NUMBERS

There are different categories of precariously employed academics at the University of Malta. The main categories are: casual staff (hourly paid lecturers (HPLs)); visiting teaching staff (zero-hours contract –

1 A COST action that “aims to increase the visibility of inequalities faced by Young Researchers and Innovators (YRIs) from a gender perspective” <https://gendervoices.eu/>

no guaranteed hours);² research support officers (RSOs, on fixed-term research contracts). Another employment category, TR (Teaching & Research) posts, is part-time but not precarious – that is, these posts are permanent and are considered to be ‘resident’ posts.

At UM, visiting staff numbered 683 in 2022/3 while resident academic staff numbered 957 (UM, 2023, p. 26). UM’s Annual Report for 2023 records 315 RSOs (UM, 2023, p. 20). The number of casual HPL staff is not stated in the Annual Report, but is likely to be considerably higher than that of resident academic staff. At MCAST, a vocational further and higher education institution, there were 593 full-time (FT) and 315 part-time (PT) academics as of 2022 (MCAST, 2022, p. 55). However, the PT and casualised posts at MCAST are increasing at a faster rate than FT posts: 141 calls were issued for PT lecturers, Coordinators, & Dissertation Supervisors in 2022, in contrast to 17 calls for full-time lecturers (MCAST, 2022, p. 40).

With the exception of casual HPL staff (who do not feature), the University of Malta is generally more transparent with its numbers than the observed trend in some other contexts, where “universities often do not even know how many precarious employees they have” (IFUT, 2023, p. 9). This might be the case, for example, where universities do not count casualised staff or calculate precariously employed staff in terms of FTE’s (full-time equivalents), rather than by headcount – an effect that adds to the ‘dehumanisation’ experienced in such roles (Mason & Megoran, 2021).

Yet it is not always easy to identify precariously employed research and teaching staff in the data. Following the definition found in the *Frascati*

2 Hours of work for precariously employed teaching staff (casual and visiting lecturers) are calculated on the basis of in-class contact hours. In the case of visiting teaching staff, the pay is usually deemed to incorporate lecture-preparation time, associated administrative duties, assessment design, and marking; however it is not clear how these impact the rates in practice, since the rate varies only according to in-class hours, rather than class size or assessment type. There is likewise some ambiguity over whether casual HPL lecturers are expected to perform these tasks and whether the casual pay can cover them, and the practice in this regard is not consistent. Casual HPL lecturers and RSOs do not receive Academic Work Resources Funds.

Manual,³ the data for ‘Researchers’ in Malta in *She Figures* includes resident lecturing staff at UM, MCAST, and Junior College, but excludes contract researchers and visiting academics (European Commission, 2021, p. 321). Research support officers (usually linked to a project) are sometimes instead classified as Technical and Administrative staff at the University of Malta (though this classification is inconsistent), and are not covered by any collective agreement (Equity Office, 2023, p. 64). Visiting staff have no office space or lockers, and very limited access to funding opportunities, which further contributes to their lack of visibility.

While some precariously employed academics may conceivably be described as ‘early career researchers’, there is cause to question the general appropriateness of this designation (see Bonello & Wånggren, 2023; Menard & Shinton, 2022; Bosanquet et al, 2017), since it implies a narrative of progression through ‘employability’ and apprenticeship. In fact, these roles only rarely (increasingly as the exception, rather than the rule) lead to better conditions and career progression. In the neoliberal university environment, it is increasingly common for these roles to entrap one in what Courtois and O’Keefe (2015) call the “hamster wheel of precarity”. In Ireland for example, academics increasingly find themselves stuck on definite contracts “for years”, with “no pathways to better employment, no support or professional development, and quite often no access to basic statutory entitlements” (IFUT, 2023, p. 7). The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) notes that the “only long-term realistic option” left to them “is to leave the sector if they want a permanent job” (2023, p. 7). In Germany, “92% of the academic workforce is currently employed on temporary contracts, whereas statistically only 5% of the PhD holders have a prospect of tenure” (Vatansever, p. 1208).

In Malta too, there is little to no mobility into permanent full-time posts. Visiting staff can be promoted within their stream, and their contracts become indefinite after 4 years according to law, under SL 452.81 Contracts of Service for a Fixed Term Regulations, Article 7(1)

3 The *Frascati Manual* defines Researchers as “professionals engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge. They conduct research and improve or develop concepts, theories, models, techniques instrumentation, software or operational methods” (OECD, 2015, p. 379).

(a). However, they do not have access to all of the CPD courses that are available to resident staff, despite the CPD being directly relevant to their primary work of teaching; in particular, they do not have access to the Foundations of University Teaching and Learning course, which is necessary for promotion at higher levels. Moreover, their employment conditions remain essentially unchanged; as an indefinite zero-hours contract, it still offers no guarantee of work. RSO contracts do not provide for the possibility of promotion. Casual HPL staff can be eligible for a visiting contract if particular conditions apply (that is, if their study-units meet certain requirements).

Unlike permanent academic posts, precarious academic jobs tend to separate teaching and research. This is a trend observed across various universities in different countries (Bonello & Wånggren, 2023). It is possible to be on different contracts (separating teaching and research) within the same institution – this also applies in Malta.

The EU's preferred term, replacing 'early career', is 'young researcher and innovator' (EU COST, 2021), based on age (under 40 years old). It may be an interesting future exercise to map the precariously employed academics at public HEIs in Malta to get a sense of their distribution by age, to see whether it is indeed mainly young researchers occupying these roles.

UNIONISATION

In Malta, as in other countries, workers on atypical contracts tend to be under-represented in unions (Debono, 2018; Debono & Fiorini, 2023; Fiorini, Debono & Borg, 2024). This is also the case for 'atypical' academic workers in Malta. While unions are increasingly addressing issues of academic precarity (including in Malta), precarious workers' participation remains low in Malta. As of October 2024, around 22 UMASA members are visiting staff and 15 are RSOs (UMASA, correspondence), out of 683 and 315 respectively.

Of the categories of precarious staff at UM, only visiting staff are covered by a Collective Agreement. Casual HPL staff have no access to the union; RSOs can join the union, but are not represented as a group, since under Recognition of Trade Unions Regulations, Art. 6(1), a union requires

the membership of more than 50% of employees to be recognised as representing them collectively.

Further study is needed in this area, but a few reasons may be suggested for this low participation in the union. Some visiting staff who have professional commitments elsewhere might prioritise membership in a professional union or Association. Since RSOs are on short-term definite contracts, the annual turnover in numbers is quite high, making this level of membership difficult to maintain stably from year to year. Insecurely employed persons also tend to be more vulnerable, and may thus be “more prone to fear reprisals by employers if they join unions” (Debono, 2018, p. 55). They may have less access to information, as has been found elsewhere (e.g. Wilson et al, 2024). At UM for example, there are no induction or institution-wide events that bring visiting staff and/or RSOs together, unlike for new resident staff. This restricts their access to channels of information, both from the institution and from their peers. Visiting staff lack dedicated physical space to work on campus, lessening their perceived (though not their actual) presence. They often work from home, in coffee shops, libraries, etc (Bonello & Wånggren, 2023). These factors also make it more difficult for these staff categories to collectivise and to form and maintain enduring solidarity networks. The union has organised some recruitment events to facilitate such interaction.

Given that the systemic pressures of neoliberalisation operate by individualising risk through insecurity (Hacker, 2019), unionisation is one effective way to build solidarity (Bonello & Wånggren, 2023) as a counterpoint to the isolating competitiveness arising from the marketisation of the academic workplace.

GENDER DISTRIBUTION

Women tend to be under-represented among academic staff across Europe (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2024, p. 40), with Malta registering 37% in 2021, 10 percentage points below the EHEA median (p. 40), although the numbers are increasing: 392 women were permanently employed academics, in comparison to 565 men in 2022/23 (UM, 2023, p. 26). The discrepancy between men and women grows larger as one climbs the ranks to Professor (Vella Azzopardi, 2019; Baldacchino

2019), with 30.8% female and 54% male at professorial levels (UM, 2023, p. 26). Career progression tends to be slower for women (Equity Office, p. 50); nonetheless, Baldacchino (2022) finds cause to feel more optimistic about a closing gap in 2022. At MCAST, 507 of the total (908) academics are male, 1 is non-binary, and 400 are women (the gender distribution by type of contract is not specified) (MCAST, 2022, p. 55). Women are also under-represented in senior decision-making positions in European academia more generally (European Commission, 2021, p. 7). This is also the case in Malta (Equity Office, 2023, pp. 2, 3).

Conversely, women have been found to be likelier to be precariously employed or employed in sectors where precarious labour is more common (Morgenroth et al, 2022). Indeed in the EU, women are generally “more likely than men to be in precarious employment throughout their lives regardless of educational level” (EIGE, 2017, p. 23). They are also likelier to be precarised in academia (Ivancheva et al, 2019; Courtois & O’Keefe, 2015; Krilić et al, 2019).

The numbers at UM diverge here. Visiting teaching staff in 2022/2023 were comprised of 243 women, and 440 men (UM, 2023, p. 26). Mirroring the trajectory among resident staff, this discrepancy is even wider at higher levels: “In the case of visiting (part-time) staff, the professors were all males” (Equity Office, 2023, p. 49). The numbers for the most precarious category, casual HPL teaching staff, are not available.

On the other hand, as in other EU countries, “other supporting staff” are disproportionately female (EU Commission, 2021, p. 79). The Equity Office also reports that women are in the majority among “support staff” at UM (Equity Office, 2023, p. 3). This is in line with the trend in other countries and other sectors, where the division of labour is gendered and women tend to be disproportionately represented in ‘support roles’. There is a tendency for these kinds of jobs to be associated with insecure employment, sometimes termed ‘feminised’ labour (Betti, 2016). This trend tends to be reproduced in academia, where the “housework of the academy” (Oakley, 1995) tends to fall on precarious workers, especially women (O’Keefe & Courtois, 2019).

The gender balance is however closer among RSOs, with over half being men (Equity Office, 2023, pp. 69-70). This deviates from the trend observed in European higher education more generally, where women

are likelier than men to be employed on precarious research contracts (European Commission, 2021, p. 7). It could be noted that one possible reason for RSOs being more ‘gender-balanced’ in Malta is that research support officers tend to be concentrated in STEM fields, which still struggle to attract, recruit and retain women particularly at higher levels of study. This has its roots in an imbalance that extends further back in education – identified as persisting through undergraduate study, where women university student numbers are higher in so-called “feminized fields of study, such as education, health, welfare, humanities and arts”, while “male students are concentrated in STEM related sectors” (Equity Office, 2023, p. 41), reproducing a pattern that has been observed across Europe (European Commission, 2021, p. 6).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The public sector HEIs in Malta in some respects follow the trend witnessed globally, including elsewhere in Europe (the rise in precarious jobs, the struggles to unionise, etc), and in other respects diverge (e.g. the gender patterns among RSOs and visiting staff). This short article has been a preliminary step in mapping precarious research and teaching jobs in Malta’s public HE sector. Further work – both qualitative and quantitative – is urgently needed in order to develop/gain a more detailed picture of the experiences in such roles, including career aspirations, and any differences across disciplines and fields. In particular, more data is needed to enable a nuanced intersectional approach.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the VOICES COST Action CA20137 (Making Young Researchers’ Voices Heard for Gender Equality); UMASA; Maria Brown; Luke A. Fiorini; Ken Scicluna; and Lena Wänggren.

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Balancing Acts:

The Impact of unequal distribution of caregiving and household responsibilities between women and men and fertility intentions

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the unequal distribution of caregiving and household responsibilities between women and men and examines their possible impact on fertility intentions. More specifically it looks at the challenges of balancing paid work with family commitments in a country characterised by the Lowest Low Fertility rate (1.08) among all EU states, and high employment rates for both women and men. The study is based on a stratified random sample of 600 individuals aged 18-39 who were surveyed via telephone, with data collection concluded in 2024. The findings reveal that respondents in Malta, on average, aspire to have two children, while men express a slightly lower ideal of 1.86, resulting in an overall average of 1.93. This is higher than the current Total Fertility Rate. Significant challenges in balancing work and childcare responsibilities emerged, with gender disparities disproportionately affecting women and influencing their fertility decisions to some extent. Younger respondents demonstrated heightened sensitivity to these imbalances, underscoring the need for policy interventions to address these gendered gaps.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, Malta has experienced one of the most significant increases in female employment rates within the European Union (Borg, 2021). During the second quarter of 2024, the employment rate among Maltese women aged 25-54 had surged to 85.5% and inched closer to the persistently high male employment rate of 96.5% (NSO, 2024). In stark contrast to this positive evolution, Malta ranked among the top ten countries globally with the lowest fertility rate (Rau, 2023). The Total Fertility Rate in a specific year is defined as: the total number of children that would be born to each woman if she were to live to the end of her childbearing years and give birth to children in alignment with the prevailing age-specific fertility rates (Eurostat, n.d). With a rate of just 1.08 (Fertility Statistics, 2024) this places Malta in the category of countries experiencing the “lowest-low-fertility” rates. This is because the average number of children born per woman is inferior to 1.30 and is by far below the replacement rate of 2.1 births per woman (Fertility Statistics, 2024). This situation raises legitimate questions that merits a deeper understanding of what is happening in relation to fertility intentions. Is this the result of free choices being made by the younger generations? Or are couples, but especially women, constrained to limit their children to just one child to be able to deal with the demands of paid work and family in a traditionally gendered context? Whilst noting that parents in Malta can make use of free child-care, women in Malta continue to carry a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and family-related work compared to men (EIGE, 2023; NCPE, 2021). Alongside other Mediterranean countries, such as Cyprus and Greece, Malta reports some of the highest levels of work-family conflict across the EU (Remery & Schippers, 2019). In the local context, many assume this is a normal fact of life, and there is little discussion about whether this is impacting on the fertility intentions of women and men. This article, derived from a much broader study, will strive to answer questions in relation to work-family conflict and the unequal sharing of burdens between women and men and its possible impact on fertility intentions.

WHAT FACTORS CAN IMPACT ON FERTILITY INTENTIONS?

Research on fertility intentions reveals a complex interplay of context specific factors influencing childbearing decisions (Moreno-Mínguez et al., 2018; Testa, 2007; Testa & Grilli, 2006). These perspectives, which vary across time and space, are shaped by a wide array of reasons, including behavioural, social, economic, educational, demographic, political, medical and migratory factors, among others (United Nations Policy Brief, 2015). Social support, cultural expectations, adequate and well-paid family policies and gender equity in domestic responsibilities also play crucial roles (Hashemzadeh et al., 2020). For example, workplace policies and benefits, such as flexible hours, well paid parental leave, and childcare support, generally increase fertility intentions by easing work-family conflict (Billingsley & Ferrarini, 2014; Kim & Parish, 2020). Work control and autonomy also positively affects fertility intentions (Begall & Mills, 2011). On the other hand, job insecurity and economic instability (Mills et al., 2011; Berninger et al., 2011) can negatively impact, or lead to delayed childbearing. Shreffler et al. (2010) highlight the role of gender in work-family conflict and fertility intentions, with men's perceptions of their wives' conflict influencing their own intentions. Partner attitudes also significantly influence individual intentions, emphasising the reciprocal nature of the decision-making process between women and men (Matias & Fontaine, 2017).

GENDER DIVISION OF ROLES IN HOUSEHOLD CHORES AND THE CARE OF THE CHILDREN

Childbearing decisions (Testa & Rampazzo, 2018; Testa & Bolano, 2019). necessitate a comprehensive understanding of gendered values and their influence on family dynamics and fertility intentions. Wesolowski and Ferrarini (2018) and García-Manglano et al. (2014) imply that a more equal division of domestic work between parents and a more supportive partner (Testa, 2007) could positively impact on fertility intentions. On the other hand, Suero (2023) who examined the gendered division of housework and childcare in Spain, found that unequal distribution of housework discouraged mothers from having a second child. Although unequal

childcare loads did not significantly affect this decision, Suero observed that university-educated women were more likely to lower their fertility aspirations when household responsibilities were unequally distributed. This indicates that the division of household duties disproportionately affected the family ideals of highly educated women compared to men or less-educated women (Testa, 2012). Testa (2017) argues that higher education does not inherently restrict fertility outcomes. Educated women often benefit from less traditional gender dynamics at home, enjoy greater autonomy in both domestic and professional spheres, and possess the financial means to secure external support. Vasireddy et al. (2023) claim that the intricate relationship between education and fertility is also affected by factors such as family policies, economic conditions, and evolving gender norms.

Focusing on the local context, Briffa (2019) reveals that the prevalence of a male breadwinner mentality in Malta which is rooted in 'Ideal Worker' norms (Acker, 1990) persists, despite the increasing number of women in the labour market. This means that men are more likely to prioritise paid work over unpaid work in the family over their life course, thus leaving the main family responsibilities and especially the caring duties to their partner. These masculine norms also tend to keep many men from taking up family related leaves like parental leave (Bailyn, 2011; Williams et al., 2013), thus perpetuating gender imbalances (Bailyn, 2011; Connell, 2012) in the care of the children and family tasks. One cannot mention 'Ideal Worker' masculine norms without bringing up gendered factors that on the other hand affect mothers. These include 'Maternal Gatekeeping' (Allen & Hawkins, 1999) and 'Intensive Mothering' (Lewis & Humbert, 2010; Herman & Lewis, 2012), which tend to reinforce traditional gender roles by blocking other caregivers, including the father from getting too involved in the care of the children or to take up parental leave (Magro, 2021). So while acknowledging the complexity of factors affecting fertility decisions, it is clear that work-family dynamics and traditional gender roles have a pivotal role in shaping women's and men's decisions about the number of children they aspire to have, and the number of children they ultimately manage to have over the life course. Is this also the case for Malta?

METHOD

A stratified random sampling method was employed to secure a representative sample of 600 individuals aged 18-39 to answer questions in relation to work life balance and family size. Data collection was conducted via a telephone survey and concluded in early 2024. The data was analysed using SPSS and frequency tables and cross-tabulations were employed to present the data in a tabular format, disaggregated by gender and other variables such as age and education where applicable. The qualitative responses were analysed thematically to categorise the data into coherent themes.

FINDINGS

Does Work family Conflict diminish fertility intentions?

The study revealed that the desired personal ideal number of children of the female respondents is 2.00 and 1.86 for males. However, as statistics shows, this is not being achieved for various reasons. As argued earlier, women's life experiences can influence the gap between their desired and actual fertility rates and challenges in meeting family responsibilities can lead to adverse outcomes, including increased stress, greater work-family conflict and diminished overall life satisfaction (Johnstone et al., 2020). Men's perceptions of the conflicts faced by their partners can also play a pivotal role in shaping their own fertility intentions (Shreffler et al., 2010). For this reason respondents in the study were asked whether in the previous three months they had found it difficult to fulfil their family responsibilities. When probed on this matter, the majority of respondents (62.8%) reported experiencing frequent or occasional difficulties in meeting family responsibilities, with women reporting higher conflicts when compared to men as can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Difficulty in fulfilling family responsibilities, by gender of respondents who are employed or self-employed

			Male	Female	Total
It has been difficult for me to fulfil my family responsibilities	Frequently	Count	27	40	67
		Percentage	10.8%	17.8%	14.1%
	Sometimes	Count	120	112	232
		Percentage	47.8%	49.8%	48.7%
	Never	Count	104	73	177
		Percentage	41.4%	32.4%	37.2%
Total		Count	251	225	476

When considering the challenges of balancing family responsibilities alongside the ability to maintain focus at work over the previous three months a significant 71.2% of women reported experiencing such difficulties frequently or occasionally, compared to 57.9% of men as can be seen in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Difficulty in fulfilling family responsibilities as well as concentrating at work, by gender of respondents who are employed or self-employed

			Male	Female	Total
It has been difficult to fulfil my family responsibilities as well as to concentrate at work	Frequently	Count	41	43	84
		Percentage	16.5%	19.4%	17.8%
	Sometimes	Count	103	115	218
		Percentage	41.4%	51.8%	46.3%
	Never	Count	105	64	169
		Percentage	42.2%	28.8%	35.9%
Total		Count	249	222	471

This observation is particularly significant, as parents, especially mothers who struggle to balance family and professional responsibilities, are more likely to demonstrate hesitation about having additional children (Dommermuth et al., 2017; Wright, 2007). Similar patterns

can be observed in other Mediterranean countries, such as Italy, Spain, Cyprus, and Greece, which are also experiencing notably low fertility rates (Eurostat, 2023). One contributing factor to heightened work-family conflicts among women may be the unequal distribution of caregiving and household responsibilities between men and women, a topic that will be explored further in the following section.

The division of unpaid work in the family between women and men

Academic research (NCPE, 2021; Borg, 2019; Camilleri-Cassar, 2016) shows a significant dissonance between the legal provisions for equality between women and men and the actual experiences of women in Malta concerning gender roles within the family. To explore this issue further, several questions regarding the care of the children and housework (for example who looks after the children and who does households chores like cooking, cleaning, ironing) were posed to examine perceptions on gender roles and how these dynamics manifest in practice within family settings between parents.

The division of childcaring roles between the parents

While an overwhelming majority of women (98.3%) and men (94.8%) theoretically agree that both parents should share child-rearing responsibilities, the reality diverges significantly from this ideal. Among respondents with children, nearly half of women (46.6%) report assuming the majority of caregiving duties, compared to only 1.0% of men who claim to do so. Approximately one-third of respondents (32.7%) indicate that caregiving responsibilities are shared equally. However, a higher proportion of men (36.3%) than women (28.9%) perceive caregiving as evenly distributed. This discrepancy suggests that women are less likely than men to view the division of responsibilities as equitable, as illustrated in Table 3 below

Table 3: Reality on who does most work in relation to childcare, by gender of respondents in a relationship with children

			Male	Female	Total
If you are in a relationship, who does most of the work in relation to the care for children, if any?	Me	Count	3	137	140
		Percentage	1.0%	46.6%	23.3%
	My partner	Count	64	4	68
		Percentage	20.9%	1.4%	11.3%
	Equally	Count	111	85	196
		Percentage	36.3%	28.9%	32.7%
	No children in the family	Count	128	68	196
		Percentage	41.8%	23.1%	32.7%
Total		Count	306	294	600

An analysis of whether caregiving disparities influence decisions to have another child (Table 4) reveals that 60.6% of respondents believe such disparities have no impact on their fertility choices. However, a closer look at the responses by gender, highlights significant differences, with nearly twice as many women (46.1%) as men (24.6%) indicating that caregiving imbalances may affect their decisions regarding fertility.

Table 4: Impact of caring gaps on fertility decisions, by gender of respondents who reported an imbalance between partners in the care of children

			Male	Female	Total
If there is an imbalance, does this influence your decision to have a child or another child?	Yes	Count	17	70	87
		Percentage	24.6%	46.1%	39.4%
	No	Count	52	82	134
		Percentage	75.4%	53.9%	60.6%
Total		Count	69	152	221

An analysis of the impact of caregiving imbalances by age (Table 5) shows that younger respondents (19-24) are less inclined to accept these disparities (45.0%) compared to older age groups. This trend indicates a potential worrying steeper decline in fertility rates in the future unless policy reforms and educational initiatives address the caregiving gaps between women and men.

Table 5: Impact of caring gaps on fertility decisions, by age of respondents who reported an imbalance between partners in the care of children

			19-24 years	25-34 years	35-39 years	Total
If there is an imbalance, does this influence your decision to have a child or another child?	Yes	Count	9	44	34	87
		Percentage	45.0%	42.7%	34.7%	39.4%
	No	Count	11	59	64	134
		Percentage	55.0%	57.3%	65.3%	60.6%
Total		Count	20	103	98	221

The division of household chores between women and men

Moving from caring to housework, when probed about the division of household chores such as cooking, cleaning, and ironing, notable gender disparities also emerged. Over half of the female respondents (51.5%) reported bearing the majority of these responsibilities, compared to only 5.9% of male respondents. Furthermore, while nearly three-quarters of men (71.4%) stated that they equally share household tasks with their partner, less than half of women (45.4%) indicated they do so. This suggests that men also perceive their contributions to household chores more positively than women do. An analysis of the impact of household chore imbalances on fertility decisions (Table 6) reveals that, for more than half of the respondents (58.3%), there is no effect. This mirrors the findings by Suero (2023) in the Spanish context. However, gender differences are also evident, with the imbalance influencing more women (46.9%) than men (32.1%) as can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 6: Impact of imbalance in household chores on fertility decisions, by gender of respondents who reported an imbalance between partners in household chores

			Male	Female	Total
If there is an imbalance, does this influence your decision to have a child or another child?	Yes	Count	26	69	95
		Percentage	32.1%	46.9%	41.7%
	No	Count	55	78	133
		Percentage	67.9%	53.1%	58.3%
Total		Count	81	147	228

Statistically significant (p-value 0.030)

Nearly 80% of respondents (78.4%) agreed that a mother lacking support from her partner is justified in deciding not to have a child or another child (Table 7). While fertility decisions are complex and influenced by multiple factors (Testa & Rampazzo, 2018; Testa & Bolano, 2019), the unequal division of unpaid care and housework seems to raise important issues that require targeted policy interventions.

Table 7: Opinion on the statement that mothers who are not supported by partners are justified in their decision not to have a child/another child, by gender of respondent

			Male	Female	Total
The mother who is not supported by her partner, justifiably decides not to have a child/or another child.	Agree	Count	237	221	458
		Percentage	79.0%	77.8%	78.4%
	Neither agree nor disagree	Count	34	29	63
		Percentage	11.3%	10.2%	10.8%
	Disagree	Count	11	11	22
		Percentage	3.7%	3.9%	3.8%
	I don't know	Count	18	23	41
		Percentage	6.0%	8.1%	7.0%
Total		Count	300	284	584

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the intricate interplay between work-family conflict (Remery & Schippers, 2019), and fertility intentions (Moreno-Mínguez et al., 2018; Testa, 2007; Testa & Grilli, 2006) in a context marked by high female employment rates (NSO, 2024; Borg, 2021) and low TFR (Fertility Statistics, 2024). The persistence of traditional gender roles that tends to bind men to their breadwinning role (Briffa, 2019; Acker, 1990; Bailyn, 2010; Willimas et al., 2013) and expectations of 'Intensive Mothering' (Magro, 2021; Lewis & Humbert, 2010; Herman & Lewis, 2012), compound these challenges in the Maltese context (EIGE, 2023; NCPE 2021). As noted in other settings (Suero, 2023; Hashemzadeh et al., 2020; Kim & Parish, 2020; Billingsley & Ferrarini, 2014) this research revealed that the deeply embedded gendered cultural norms that see women disproportionately bearing the brunt of care giving and housework, has a direct impact on the fertility intentions, leaving them more hesitant than men to consider expanding their families. Such imbalances could potentially lead to future declines in fertility rates if left unaddressed, as younger cohorts exhibit a lower tolerance for unequal divisions of care and household duties. While fertility decisions remain complex and multifaceted (Testa & Rampazzo, 2018; Testa & Bolano, 2019), the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work imposes cannot be ignored and necessitates urgent attention through targeted policy.

To address these structural and cultural barriers, targeted interventions are necessary. For example, promoting greater involvement among fathers, in caregiving and household duties to bridge these disparities. Moreover, education and sustained public awareness campaigns are essential to challenge and redefine societal norms surrounding gender roles within families and broader society. Establishing a supportive framework that enables families to balance caregiving responsibilities with paid employment requires significant investment and unwavering commitment at the highest levels.

The potential for transformative change is evident, and this study emphasises the urgency of implementing effective measures to address declining fertility rates linked to gender role expectations. Prioritising a work-family perspective and fostering gender equality can yield

substantial long-term benefits (Doepke et al., 2022). However, addressing gender roles alone may not be sufficient and other critical factors, such as improving family-related leave policies—including maternity, paternity, and parental leave—must also be prioritised, as current provisions seem to be inadequate (Borg & Camilleri, 2024).

Women are conveying a strong message: that balancing acts are difficult to sustain and that walking on a tight rope and bearing the heavier family load is not conducive to have another child. Can the country afford to continue disregarding this critical message?

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This write up is based on a research study co-authored with Prof. Liberato Camilleri and commissioned and published by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE, 2024)



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Trade unions and the protection of migrant workers in Europe:

Barriers, approaches and interventions

ABSTRACT

Migrant workers in Europe, particularly those from third countries, often encounter challenging working conditions that could significantly benefit from the support and protection provided by trade unions. This study explores the substantial obstacles that migrant workers must overcome to unionise, emphasising the structural disadvantages they face in the process. It also examines the attitudes of European trade unions towards migrant workers, revealing a growing pro-immigration trend despite certain setbacks. The study concludes by shedding light on intriguing strategies and initiatives used by trade unions to support migrant workers. The effort to integrate migrant workers into trade unions is worthwhile, despite the many difficulties involved. Unionisation stands as one of the most effective means of improving the working and living conditions of migrant workers.

INTRODUCTION

Migration across Europe has increased significantly, largely due to the European Union's (EU) principle of free movement, which allows EU citizens to live and work in any member state without needing a visa or work permit. This policy has not only facilitated internal migration but has also attracted a substantial number of third-country nationals (TCNs) to the EU. In 2021, about 13.7 million EU citizens were living in a member state other than their own, and in 2022, around 7.1 million were employed in such countries (Delpero, 2022; Destatis, 2023). Besides internal migration, Europe also hosts a significant number of TCNs, with 23.8 million non-EU citizens residing in the EU, of whom 9.93 million were employed (European Commission, 2023).

The working conditions for migrants in the EU vary greatly and are influenced by several factors, notably whether they are EU citizens or TCNs. Internal migrants benefit from EU laws that ensure they receive similar working conditions and social protections as native citizens in their host countries. In contrast, TCNs are often more vulnerable, facing lower legal and social protections and are more susceptible to changes in their host country's socio-economic conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the precarious situations faced by many migrant workers, particularly those in essential sectors with inadequate protections. These vulnerabilities have led to concerns over issues such as forced labour, human trafficking, and other forms of exploitation (Corbanese & Rosas, 2021).

Unionisation can significantly improve the working conditions of migrant workers, potentially bringing them on par with native workers. Trade unions play a crucial role in safeguarding workers' rights across Europe through negotiations, advocacy, and mobilisation. However, the extent to which trade unions assist migrants varies, and the process of unionisation is fraught with challenges. This study delves into the barriers faced by migrant workers in unionising, the approaches and attitudes of European trade unions towards these workers, and the interventions employed to support them.

BARRIERS TO UNIONISATION FACED BY MIGRANTS

The relationship between trade unions and migrant workers is complex and often problematic. Unionisation rates among migrants consistently lag behind those of native-born workers, a trend that is observed across advanced capitalist economies (Gorodzeisky & Richards, 2013). Several barriers contribute to the low unionisation rates among migrants, which are discussed in the following sections.

A. Labour market segregation and length of stay

TCNs are over-represented in specific economic sectors that are typically non-unionised, such as accommodation and food services, construction, domestic work, agriculture, and administrative and support services (European Commission, 2023). These sectors often involve atypical forms of employment, such as temporary or seasonal contracts, making it difficult for workers to organise and form a collective voice. Moreover, migrants employed illegally are especially hesitant to complain about their working conditions due to the heightened risk of deportation.

Even when migrants work in the same industrial sectors as native workers, their union membership rates remain lower (Gorodzeisky & Richards, 2013). This suggests that the gap in union membership is not solely due to labour market segregation but also to other factors such as the length of stay in the host country. Migrants who do not plan to stay long in the host country are less likely to join a union (Kranendonk & De Beer, 2016). For instance, research in Malta found that about half of the foreign workers leave the labour market within two years or less (Borg, 2019). “EU nationals, younger individuals, and lower-skilled foreign workers exhibit a relatively shorter length of stay” (Borg, 2019, p.1), making them less likely to join unions.

B. Language, culture, knowledge, and trust

Language barriers significantly hinder migrant workers’ understanding of their rights and the workings of trade unions. Cultural differences further complicate communication and interaction with unions, making it difficult for migrants to participate actively. For example, a study on Polish workers

in the UK found that language barriers deterred their transformation from passive to active union members (Fitzgerald & Hardy, 2010).

In addition to language and cultural barriers, migrants often lack knowledge of their legal protections and may be uncertain about their immigration status. This uncertainty can lead to fear and reluctance to participate in trade unions (Hardy & Fitzgerald, 2008). A lack of trust in unions, often perceived as part of the national establishment, also discourages migrants from engaging with unions (Kahmann, 2002). This distrust is particularly prevalent among migrants from former Communist states, who may view unions with scepticism due to their experiences in their home countries (Dundon et al., 2007; Danaj et al., 2018). Despite these challenges, some studies indicate that migrants generally trust trade unions more than native-born individuals, although this trust tends to decrease over time (Gorodzeisky & Richards, 2020).

C. Laws and institutions

Legal frameworks in host countries can either support or hinder migrant workers' participation in trade unions. On one hand, European provisions on freedom of movement and social security coordination provide a common legal framework for EU citizens, facilitating trade union interventions. For instance, trade unions in Luxembourg use this legal framework to offer support services to the majority of migrant workers in the country (Thomas, 2020).

However, TCNs face less favourable treatment under European laws compared to EU nationals. In many European countries, legal frameworks increase the vulnerability of migrants by making them dependent on specific employers, thereby diminishing their ability to protect themselves from exploitation (Castles, 1990). These laws facilitate the establishment of a highly flexible group of migrant workers who act as a buffer, readily expendable during economic downturns, thus shouldering the majority of the uncertainty without triggering political problems (Meardi et al., 2012).

D. Previous experience with trade unionism

Migrants' previous experiences with trade unions in their home countries influence their likelihood of joining unions in their host country. According to a study that examined unionisation in 23 European countries, immigrants from countries with low unionisation rates are less likely to join unions in their new country (Kranendonk & De Beer, 2016). In relation to the notion of 'familiarity', migrants had a higher probability of becoming union members in the destination country if they originated from its former colonies (Kranendonk & De Beer, 2016). However, familiarity with trade unions does not always translate into union membership. For instance, research on Polish workers in the UK and Switzerland found that previous union membership in Poland did not significantly influence their involvement in British and Swiss unions (Rogalewski, 2022).

E. Stereotypes and discrimination

Stereotyping and discrimination against migrant workers can occur at multiple levels, including from employers, co-workers, and even within trade unions. Native workers who feel vulnerable may exclude migrants, viewing them as a threat (Gorodzeisky & Richards, 2016). Employers may intimidate migrant workers by threatening retaliation or job termination if they attempt to join unions. Stereotyping of migrants by union leaders may lead to discrimination within unions. For example, Portuguese migrant workers in Luxembourg are sometimes stereotyped as passive consumers of union services, while French cross-border workers are viewed as more conflict-oriented (Thomas, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic may have increased these stereotypes, particularly against TCNs (Debono & Garzia, 2022).

Interestingly, research shows that in countries with more favourable attitudes towards migrants, the latter are less likely to unionise. This counterintuitive trend suggests that migrants may feel a stronger need to organise in countries where they experience more discrimination, as a means of protecting themselves (Kranendonk & De Beer, 2016).

The barriers discussed in this section are not exhaustive but highlight the significant challenges migrant workers face in unionising. These challenges often overlap and interact, highlighting the need for unions to take proactive steps in supporting migrant workers. The next section

explores how European trade unions perceive and respond to the issues faced by migrant workers.

EUROPEAN TRADE UNIONS' APPROACHES TO MIGRANT WORKERS

Trade unions have historically been established to fight for better working conditions and rights for workers. However, when it comes to migrant workers, their approach has been ambivalent, shaped by both internal and external challenges. The economic principle of supply and demand plays a significant role in this ambivalence, as an influx of foreign workers is often perceived as a threat to local workers' wages and conditions (Pajares, 2008).

Penninx and Roosblad (2000) identified three key dilemmas that trade unions face concerning migrant workers: whether to cooperate or resist government and employer policies on immigration; whether to include or exclude migrants from union membership; and whether to pursue equal treatment for all workers or implement special strategies for migrants. These dilemmas continue to shape the discourse on migrant workers and unionisation, as will be seen below.

A. General trends supporting migrant workers

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has been at the forefront of promoting migrant workers' rights. It advocates for a holistic EU migration policy based on solidarity, integration, and inclusiveness, and emphasises that well-managed immigration can help Europe address its socioeconomic challenges (ETUC, 2016). ETUC initiatives have included promoting the rights of undocumented migrant workers, advocating for their recognition as workers regardless of their legal status, and encouraging their organisation and recruitment into trade unions (ETUC, 2018).

In recent years, European trade unions have generally adopted a pro-immigration stance, advocating for policies that embrace immigration and cultural diversity (Donnelly, 2016). Unions increasingly recognise the vital role of immigrants in the workforce and the importance of protecting their rights (Pajares, 2008). A cross-national analysis of data from 14 European countries revealed that unionised workers tend to have more

positive views on immigration than non-union members (Gorodzeisky & Richards, 2016). This may be due to the influence of union leaders who endorse open immigration policies and the improved job security and working conditions of unionised workers (Donnelly, 2016).

B. The impact of the industrial relations system on membership and working conditions

The industrial relations system in the host country significantly influences migrant workers' union membership. In countries with an organised corporatist regime, such as the Nordic countries, there is a more pronounced disparity in unionisation rates between migrants and native workers compared to countries with more fragmented regimes, such as those in Central and Eastern Europe (Kranendonk & De Beer, 2016).

When trade unions enjoy a high level of organisational security, such as state funding or a dominant position as the sole trade union confederation, they may exert less effort to organise migrant workers (Gorodzeisky & Richards, 2016). For instance, in Denmark, where unions can negotiate agreements with companies without having members, the focus has traditionally been on collective agreements rather than actively involving migrant workers (Refslund, 2021).

Despite these challenges, countries with corporatist regimes tend to have higher overall migrant membership levels compared to other regimes. This suggests that the rate of unionisation among migrants is primarily influenced by the host country's overall unionisation rate (Kranendonk & De Beer, 2016).

C. Examples of unions' restrictive attitudes and policies

While the general trend among European trade unions is pro-immigration, there are considerable differences in attitudes and policies across different countries. Some unions maintain restrictive policies that limit the rights and protections of migrant workers.

For example, Austrian unions have been criticised for tolerating conditions of significant inequality for migrants, such as the constant risk of deportation, limited job stability, and restricted access to

unemployment benefits (Pajares, 2008). Similarly, while Spanish unions have historically been critical of restrictive policies, some leaders have recently expressed concerns about the impact of immigration on native workers' wages (Pajares, 2008). In Luxembourg, trade unions have been reluctant to take part in campaigns for "political citizenship rights for immigrants", perceiving such issues as "too divisive and a threat to union cohesion" (Thomas, 2016, p.252). These examples illustrate the complex dynamics within trade unions and the influence of broader societal attitudes towards migration.

TRADE UNIONS' WIDENING REMIT AND INTERVENTIONS

In response to the challenges posed by migration, trade unions are increasingly broadening their focus beyond traditional labour issues to include social justice and community support. This shift reflects a growing recognition of the need to address the broader socio-political concerns of migrant workers.

A. Structural changes and the active inclusion of migrants

Trade unions across Europe are undergoing significant transformations in their internal structures to better support and include migrant workers. Some unions have established specialised sections or committees dedicated to migrant workers' issues. For example, the UK GMB union set up a migrant workers' branch in Southampton, which has been successful in recruiting and organising members from the Polish community (Hardy & Fitzgerald, 2008).

In some cases, unions have adopted particularly creative outreach methods to engage migrant workers. The Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL) in Italy implemented an initiative involving union representatives travelling across the country in mobile units to meet seasonal migrant workers at their gathering points or hiring places, informing them of their rights, and promoting union awareness through multilingual information materials (European Trade Union Institute, ETUI, 2019).

To enhance communication with migrant workers, some unions recruit

foreign workers to work with them. For example, the United Federation of Danish Workers has hired several workers with foreign backgrounds to strengthen dialogue with migrant workers and provides access to interpreters in all local union branches (Refslund, 2021).

Despite these efforts, there remain significant barriers to the effective participation of migrant workers in trade union structures, particularly in decision-making processes and leadership roles. Research suggests that unions emphasising ‘participatory democracy,’ with decentralised, grassroots coordination and active shop steward involvement, may be more successful in engaging migrant members compared to those with top-down, centralised approaches (Marino, 2015).

B. Training programmes

Training initiatives have become essential tools for engaging vulnerable workers, including migrants. Unions have adopted various strategies for providing training, either by organising it themselves or collaborating with community organisations. Language training, in particular, has proven to be a crucial means of empowerment, helping migrants to integrate into the union and become more active members (Mustchin, 2012).

Training initiatives support broader union goals such as recruitment, activist development, and securing recognition agreements (Mustchin, 2012). However, these initiatives face several challenges. For example, trade union training for migrants in the UK was found to often be separated from daily trade union activities, creating strategy fragmentation. Besides, access to learning services was geographically uneven, there was limited accessibility to learning centres, and inter-union coordination was lacking (Connolly et al., 2012). Another study in the UK highlighted that organising migrant workers through union learning initiatives caused tensions within and between unions, community organisations, and the state (Mustchin, 2012).

C. Collaborations

Collaborations between trade unions and other organisations have been instrumental in supporting migrant workers. International collaborations between unions have facilitated cross-border support for migrants. For

instance, since the 1950s, the Belgian and Luxembourg Confederations of Christian Trade Unions have maintained a bilateral membership arrangement for cross-border workers, allowing them to engage in trade union activities in both countries (Thomas, 2020). In Malta, the General Workers Union collaborated with the UN's Refugee Agency to develop resources on workers rights in various languages (Debono & Fiorini, 2023).

Grassroots collaborations have also emerged as effective means of supporting migrants. In the UK, numerous local initiatives were established to assist migrant workers following the 2004 EU enlargement. These initiatives often involved community activism, with trade unions collaborating with local councils, churches, NGOs, and community groups to provide new services to migrants, such as combining social activities with language training (Fitzgerald & Hardy, 2010).

D. The establishment of new unions

In some cases, the establishment of new, purpose-built unions has proven more effective than attempting to reform traditional unions. The Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain (IWGB), founded in 2012 by Latin American cleaners, is one such example. This union is part of a broader trend of "indie unions", which are "small, agile, and confrontational", focusing on organising migrant workers in precarious jobs (Dias-Abey, 2021, p.286). Indie unions are more inclined to embrace unauthorised strikes and legal actions. The IWGB gained prominence by successfully bringing employment tribunal cases addressing the issue of worker status in the gig economy (Roberts, 2018). These unions are particularly effective at community organising, bypassing the challenges of workplace-based organising (Dias-Abey, 2021).

Another example is the Ukrainian Workers' Trade Union in Poland, established to support the growing number of Ukrainian migrants. This union provides legal advice, reports abusive employers, and collaborates with fair employers to help new migrants find work. Although it operates independently, it receives support from the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ) (ETUI, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the significant barriers that prevent migrant workers from joining trade unions in Europe and examines how unions respond to the challenges posed by migration. While trade unions have become more supportive of migrants over time, internal and external resistance continues to complicate their efforts to fully integrate migrant workers into their structures.

The relationship between trade unions and migrant workers is complex and fraught with tensions. Integrating migrant workers into unions is not a straightforward process and requires unions to overcome significant organisational and structural challenges. However, the effort is worthwhile, as unionisation remains one of the most effective means of improving the working and living conditions of migrant workers.

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Debono, M. (2023). Trade unions and the protection of migrant workers in Europe: Barriers, approaches and interventions. *e-Revista Internacional de la Protección Social*, Número extraordinario 2023, 92–110.



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Work-related mental health and well-being in Malta:

Progress, challenges, and the evolving nature of work

ABSTRACT

This report examines key aspects of workplace health and well-being in Malta, focusing on mental health, psychosocial risks, organisational initiatives, and the evolving nature of work. Remote working has increased significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic, with benefits such as improved work-life balance for some and challenges like increased presenteeism and blurred work-home boundaries for others. Initiatives like flexible working hours, employee assistance programmes (EAPs), and healthy lifestyle incentives are becoming more common, but gaps in tackling well-being persist, especially in smaller organisations. In particular, the integration of psychosocial risks into risk assessments is limited. The findings underscore the need for a holistic approach to workplace well-being, including stronger policies, enhanced training, tailored interventions, and comprehensive data collection. By addressing these gaps, Malta can ensure a healthier and more productive workforce.

INTRODUCTION

Workplace health and well-being are critical components of a productive and sustainable workforce, yet they remain complex and multifaceted challenges. This article explores the current state of workplace mental health and well-being in Malta, drawing on recent surveys and studies to analyse progress, identify gaps, and examine the impact of remote working and platform work. It highlights key measures implemented by organisations to support employees, as well as the challenges that continue to affect their effectiveness. By synthesising these findings, the article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the evolving landscape of workplace well-being in Malta and offer insights into practical steps for improvement.

TRENDS IN HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN MALTA

Regular health and safety statistics in Malta are largely limited to data on accidents and occupational fatalities. Trends, particularly those related to non-fatal accidents, suggest a decline despite increasing employment rates (Fiorini & La Ferla, 2021; Fiorini et al., 2024). Due to the lack of consistent local statistics on occupational health factors, including mental health, EU surveys and published academic and local studies were analysed to provide further insights.

European surveys indicate that adults and workers in Malta generally report good general health levels, with more individuals rating their health positively compared to most EU countries (Eurofound, 2017b; Eurostat, 2022; Fiorini, 2019). In a more recent Eurostat (2022) survey, only three EU countries reported higher average health ratings. However, while males tend to report better health than females, a trend consistent across the EU, 31% of respondents in Malta report having a long-standing health issue, just below the EU average.

Older European surveys indicated that mental well-being levels in Malta were poorer than the EU average (Eurofound, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). However, more recent findings paint a slightly more positive picture, particularly for the general adult population. For instance, Eurostat (2019)

reported that only 3.5% of individuals aged 15 or older in Malta suffer from chronic depression, one of the lowest rates in the EU and substantially below the EU average of 7.2%. Similarly, the rate of intentional self-harm deaths in 2020 was 4 per 100,000, lower than the EU average of 10, with males being more affected. Additionally, the proportion of individuals at risk of depression in Malta based on the WHO-5 index was 53%, slightly below the EU average (Eurofound-ETF, 2022), while life satisfaction levels in 2022 were slightly higher than the EU average (Eurostat, 2023). Among workers, Eurofound (2023) found that 40% of respondents in Malta reported high mental well-being, just exceeding the EU average. A MISCO (2024) annual survey of 300 workers highlighted that whilst 69% of respondents rated their mental health positively in 2021, this dropped to 56% in 2023 but rose again to 62% in 2024. The MISCO survey also highlights trends in stress levels and psychological symptoms. Between 2021 and 2024, the proportion of workers reporting poor or very poor stress levels rose from 45% to 52%. In 2024, the survey also found that over the past 12 months, 39% of respondents experienced long-lasting sadness or irritability, 38% lost interest in previously enjoyable activities, 35% experienced extreme mood swings, 33% dealt with excessive fear or anxiety, 27% faced social withdrawal, and 19% reported changes in eating or sleeping habits. Unlike stress levels, most psychological symptoms showed a decline in 2024 compared to previous years.

The data presents a nuanced picture of health and well-being in Malta. While general health outcomes appear strong compared to EU averages, workplace mental health challenges are increasingly evident. The limited and variable quality of available data on workers makes it difficult to gain a clear and reliable understanding of mental health in Malta. However, the few existing surveys suggest that stress and psychological symptoms may be prevalent, highlighting the need for targeted interventions. Additionally, the extent to which mental health varies across sectors remains unclear, underscoring the urgent need for regular, high-quality research on this issue.

RISK FACTORS FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN MALTA

The European Working Conditions Telephone Survey 2021 (Eurofound, 2023) highlights several risk factors and job quality indicators for employees in Malta. While the percentage of employees who experienced adverse social behaviour (12%) was below the EU average, those reporting job insecurity (15%) were in line with the EU average. Conversely, reports of discrimination (15%), unsociable working hours (41%), and work intensity (48%) exceeded the EU average. Notably, the prevalence of unsociable working hours was the highest in the EU, and only two countries reported higher rates of work intensity.

The same survey also provides insights into job quality in Malta. Employees reported high levels of job significance (94%, the highest in the EU), management support (86%, the highest in the EU), career opportunities (65%, second highest in the EU), and voice (59%, second highest in the EU). However, only 66% of employees felt recognised at work, and 56% reported appropriate pay—both below the EU average (Eurofound, 2023). Research on stress and mental health has shown that such job resources can help workers cope with psychosocial risks, reduce stress, and improve engagement (Fiorini et al., 2021). The findings also reflect certain aspects of the current labour market, which is characterised by high employment and a shortage of workers. This environment offers many workers opportunities to enhance their occupational standing. However, it often comes at the cost of long working hours, potentially intensified by the rise in remote working (see next section), and frequently accompanied by salaries that remain below the EU average.

The MISCO (2024) survey identified perceived causes of occupational stress among employees in Malta. The most commonly cited causes were heavy workload (18%), tight deadlines (14%), lack of support (12%), long hours (8%), low morale (7%), regulations and procedures (7%), and the work environment (7%). Between 2022 and 2024, many of these causes of stress have either remained stable or decreased; for example, heavy workload as a cause of stress reduced by 7%. However, tight deadlines (+3%), regulations and procedures (+2%), and the work environment (+2%) showed gradual increases. The survey does not show that work-related stress is becoming less prevalent, thus it appears that the perceived causes of stress are changing.

Overall, while Malta's workforce enjoys high levels of job significance, management support, and career opportunities, challenges persist, particularly concerning stress-related factors such as work intensity, unsociable hours, and job recognition. Addressing these issues is crucial to fostering a healthier and more resilient workforce.

REMOTE WORK AND PLATFORM WORK

Remote working increased significantly in 2020 as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the EU Labour Force Survey, a quarter of employees in Malta worked from home in 2020, marking a 15% increase compared to 2019 and representing one of the most substantial rises among EU member states (Eurofound, 2021). By 2022, approximately 35% of workers were engaged in remote work, either fully or partially, which exceeded the EU average (Eurofound-ETF, 2022). The MISCO (2024) survey also reported that 40% of workers in Malta had the option to work remotely, reflecting a 7% increase from the previous year. This suggests that employers have continued to embrace remote working practices to some extent. Among those with the opportunity to work remotely, 36% had no fixed schedule, 18% worked remotely one day per week, 14% worked remotely four days a week, and 10% worked remotely three days per week.

The shift to remote working has had mixed effects on employees' health. A survey of workers in the IT and communications sector revealed that while 23% of remote workers reported an improvement in their health compared to pre-pandemic levels, 33% reported a decline (Fiorini, 2023a). Similarly, a study of trade union members found that, when compared to the period before the pandemic, a significant proportion reported worsened physical health (37%) and mental health (40%), with very few noting any improvement (8% and 5%, respectively). However, no significant differences were observed between those working remotely and those who were not (Debono & Garzia, 2023), thus the findings may have been pandemic-related.

Qualitative findings by Fiorini (2023a) attributed the reported health improvements to benefits associated with remote working, including healthier behaviours such as improved eating habits, better

sleep patterns, and greater control over mental health conditions. Other advantages included reduced commuting time, an enhanced work-life balance, and more time for personal activities and family. On the other hand, those who experienced a decline in health linked it to poorer behaviours while working from home, such as reduced physical activity, along with the emergence of negative emotions, mental health issues, and social isolation. Additional contributing factors included increased work demands and difficulties in managing household responsibilities, such as childcare, while working remotely (Fiorini, 2023a).

Remote work has also brought about changes in illness-related behaviours. Workers in Malta were found to take less sick leave but engaged more frequently in presenteeism, or working while ill (Fiorini, 2024). Reductions in absenteeism may partly reflect better general health, such as reduced exposure to communicable diseases. However, it may also suggest that workers substituted absenteeism with presenteeism, especially when working remotely. Additionally, remote workers reported working beyond their agreed hours, which was attributed to the blurring of boundaries between work and home life, difficulties in disconnecting from work, and increasing work demands. This trend contributed to burnout and the development of musculoskeletal disorders in remote workers (Fiorini, 2023b).

The majority of respondents in the MISCO (2024) survey indicated that partial remote work, such as working from home two to three days a week, was the most beneficial arrangement for their well-being. Interestingly, Fiorini (2023a) found that workers who spent more days working remotely reported better overall health.

The COVID-19 pandemic also prompted a rise in platform work. By 2022, nearly 5% of Malta's working-age population was engaged in digital platform work (NSO, 2023). Although no formal studies have explored this topic in-depth, reports from social partners, including trade unions and charities, raised concerns about the poor conditions of platform workers. Many platform workers were reportedly earning less than the minimum wage and losing a substantial portion of their income to recruitment agencies (Rizzo & Fiorini, 2023). These challenges led to the introduction of legislation aimed at addressing bogus self-employment.

In conclusion, while remote working has brought several advantages, such as greater flexibility and improved well-being for some, it has also introduced challenges, including increased presenteeism, extended working hours, and new health risks. Addressing these issues is crucial to optimise the benefits of remote working while mitigating its drawbacks.

ORGANISATIONAL MEASURES FOR WORK-RELATED STRESS AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

The European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER) (EU-OHSA, 2019) revealed that while 41% of organisations had an action plan to prevent work-related stress, 70% had procedures in place to address bullying and harassment, and 65% had protocols to manage potential cases of threats, abuse, or assault by clients. The implementation of these measures exceeded the EU average. However, when it came to integrating psychosocial risks into risk assessments, only 39% of respondents who conducted risk assessments reported having sufficient information to do so. This was the lowest percentage recorded in the EU. It is important to note that ESENER (EU-OHSA, 2019) focused exclusively on organisations with five or more employees, excluding Malta's many micro-enterprises. Consequently, it is likely that the actual prevalence of these measures across all organisations in Malta is lower.

The MISCO (2024) survey also shed light on measures implemented by organisations to support employees. The most common initiatives included flexible working hours (48%), employee assistance programmes (EAP) or access to therapy (34%), fostering an open communication culture (23%), healthy lifestyle initiatives such as providing healthy food or gym facilities (19%), employee empowerment (14%), training line managers to manage and support staff with mental health issues (13%), mental health first aiders (13%), virtual meetups (9%), stress reduction programmes (7%), and phased returns to work after long absences (7%). The prevalence of some measures, including flexible working hours, open communication culture, healthy lifestyle initiatives, and phased returns to work, remained stable over three years. However, other initiatives saw notable increases over the same period, including EAPs (+12%), mental

health first aiders (+5%), and stress reduction programmes (+3%). Despite these improvements, 27% of respondents stated that their organisation offered none of these measures, although this represented a 7% decrease compared to three years earlier.

The MISCO (2024) survey also sought participants' opinions on measures they believed would improve employee health and well-being. Flexible working hours (36%), stress reduction initiatives (31%), healthy lifestyle initiatives such as gym access or healthier food options (31%), training for line managers (19%), EAPs (19%), and mental health first aiders (8%) emerged as the most favoured. Over the past three years, the popularity of stress reduction initiatives (-9%), mental health first aiders (-4%), and training for line managers (-2%) had declined, whereas healthy lifestyle initiatives (+6%) had gained favour.

While organisations in Malta are taking steps to address workplace stress and psychosocial risks, significant gaps remain, particularly in the integration of psychosocial risks into assessments. Further efforts are needed to ensure that comprehensive measures are adopted more widely, whilst a greater focus on smaller organisations is needed.

CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD

The findings across various studies and surveys underscore a mixed picture of workplace health and well-being in Malta. While notable progress has been made in certain areas, such as enhanced organisational measures to support employee mental health, and positive trends in some aspects of physical and mental health, significant challenges remain. Psychosocial risks, stress, and mental health issues continue to affect a substantial proportion of the workforce. Although organisations have implemented initiatives like flexible working hours, employee assistance programmes, and healthy lifestyle incentives, gaps in addressing psychosocial risks in risk assessments and data related to smaller organisations are evident.

To build on the progress achieved so far, a multi-faceted approach is suggested. This should include:

- 1 **Policy and Regulation:** Strengthen policies that mandate the inclusion of workplace psychosocial risk assessments and expand support for smaller organisations to implement such measures effectively. Currently, Malta lacks regulations specific to work-related psychosocial risks.
- 2 **Awareness and Training:** Increased awareness and training for employers and employees on the importance of mental health. In particular, health and safety practitioners and employers must be educated on psychosocial risks and their assessment.
- 3 **Targeted Interventions:** Employers must develop interventions that address organisation-specific challenges, particularly in high-risk organisations or those with high levels of work intensity and unsociable hours. Authorities, employer associations and trade unions should contribute by developing resources to address national and sector-specific challenges.
- 4 **Data and Monitoring:** Conduct more regular and comprehensive surveys, including of Malta's micro-enterprises, to better understand and address workplace health and well-being.
- 5 **New working arrangements:** Provide updated regulations, guidelines and support so that organisations can better manage the challenges of remote working and platform working, including work-life balance, presenteeism, the blurring of work-home boundaries, and the right to disconnect.

By fostering a culture that prioritises mental and physical well-being, Malta can ensure a healthier and more productive workforce.

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SECTION 4

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MR SAVIOUR RIZZO M.Ed.(Melit)., B.A.General has been active in the Centre since its inception in 1981. He lectured in Sociology of Work, Education and the Labour Market and Gender in Sociology. He took an active part in the organization of seminars, courses and conferences organized by the centre. He was also one of the contributors to the publications of the centre. Between the years 2003 and 2009 he occupied the post of Director of the Centre. At present, he occasionally works as a research officer at the centre.

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MS JOSEPHINE AGIUS has been employed at the University of Malta since 1995 and joined the Centre's staff in January 2000. She works as an Administration Specialist and provides administrative support to the Diploma in Gender, Work and Society, Bachelor in Work and Human Resources Cohorts 2020-2025 and 2022-2027. In October 2023, Ms Agius was appointed Secretary to the CLS Board.



MS STEPHANIE MUSCAT Cert. Lang. Pr.(Melit.), Dip. Soc. St.(Melit.), B.A. (Hons) (Melit.), Ms Muscat joined the University of Malta in 1995 and the Centre for Labour Studies in March 2011. She worked as an Administration Specialist up until November 2023 and provided administrative support to the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources cohort (2020-2025), as well as assisting with the Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (2018-2023). She served as Secretary of the CLS Board between October 2022 and October 2023.



MS ALESSIA ZAHRA B.Sc. (Hons) HE(Melit.) Ms. Zahra joined the Centre for Labour Studies in September 2022 and works as an Administrator. She provides administrative support to the Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety cohorts (2022–2027 and 2020–2025). Additionally, she manages the Centre’s website, handles design-related tasks, and posts content on the Centre’s social media platforms. Ms. Zahra also assists the Director in compiling the biennial report.



MS ELISA CARUANA joined the Centre in December 2023 as an Administrator and handles general administrative work when required by the Centre.



**PROFESSOR
MANWEL DEBONO**

A personal reflection on Ronald Sultana's connections with the Centre for Labour Studies and his impact on local career guidance

Ronald taught me sociology in the 1990s. Several years later, in 2002, he interviewed me as part of an international review of national career guidance policies commissioned by the European Training Foundation. At the time, I was coordinating the University's Students Advisory Services. Ronald's work on this review and similar others, formed an integral part of the most exhaustive career guidance database ever compiled, propelling him to international recognition in the field. Unaware of the significance of the work that he was carrying out, I was struck by Ronald's unassuming demeanour, his skill of putting people at ease, and his insightful questioning.



A couple of years later, Ronald contacted the Centre for Labour Studies where I had recently started working as an academic. Having learnt of our Diploma in Occupational Guidance and Career Counselling, he proposed collaborating on a Postgraduate Diploma in the same area. We embarked on developing this new course, drawing from the existing

diploma and enriching it through an examination of similar European and international courses. By then, Ronald had already accumulated extensive global insights into career guidance, born from his international reviews and experiences. His contribution to the development of the Postgraduate Diploma in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development was crucial.

First of all, he insisted on the rather lengthy name to emphasise its broad scope, covering career development across one's lifespan. It needed to be made clear that the course was not just meant for practitioners within compulsory schooling and students faced with early career choices.

While 'lifelong orientation' was one pillar of the new course, another important pillar was Ronald's focus on the three notions of 'savoir', 'savoir faire', and 'savoir etre'. He believed in nurturing career advisors into 'reflective practitioners' who balanced theoretical knowledge with practical skills, alongside personal and professional growth. He maintained that one's personality and outlook needs to be appropriate for career guidance work. This philosophy underpinned the course's structure and its units, including those taught by Ronald himself, like professional ethics. 'Interdisciplinarity' was another important pillar that Ronald emphasised as part of the new course. In the 2000s, it was uncommon for the University to offer joint courses by multiple entities, and we had to defend this approach before a sub-senate committee. Ronald's reasoning was sound: to address the lifelong career needs of individuals, the course should leverage expertise from both educational and labour market perspectives. As time passed, the concept of shared courses gained wider acceptance and became a more common practice.

During the late 2000s, Ronald focused on the international career guidance scene. Nonetheless, he remained deeply invested in Malta's career guidance development, often contributing behind the scenes. Following his recommendation to the then Minister of Education, I was appointed as chair of a working group that wrote a national career guidance policy for schools, published in 2007. Ronald was critical of the fragmented and inconsistent career services in Malta and advocated for a 'community of practice' to unify and enhance local services. He encouraged the formation of the Malta Career Guidance Association in 2009, actively supporting its endeavours. His efforts to foster networks among career guidance stakeholders in Malta also led him to set up a



Guidance Forum, take part in national conferences and continuous professional development events for practitioners, and continually disseminate career guidance information to enhance practitioner skills.

Ronald was a prolific author, covering topics such as history of education, sociology of education, teacher education, comparative education, and career guidance. He commanded respect among international scholars and students. Equally compelling as a speaker, his engaging presentations, peppered with his characteristic cheeky wit, were as renowned as his writings, leading to keynote speeches worldwide. Ronald's extensive networking enriched our career guidance course, bringing many esteemed international figures to contribute their expertise. He also coordinated with the Malta Career Guidance Association to facilitate these experts' involvement in professionalising local practitioners.

Our career guidance course eventually evolved into a Master's degree and gained international recognition as an example of good practice. This was particularly notable as many countries, much larger than Malta, had not managed to develop and sustain something similar. In 2019, we assisted Helwan University in Egypt to develop their career guidance

course, drawing on Ronald's global knowledge and our experience in Malta. Just a week before his sudden passing, we were in the Faroe Islands, discussing our course in view of the specific needs of the practitioners there.

Ronald was both a visionary and a realist, always juggling various projects. While some innovative initiatives, like an online Master's degree in career guidance for the MENA region, didn't materialise, many others, like the 2019 '6th European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling (ECADOC) International Doctoral Summer School', that Ronald organised with the collaboration of Centre for Labour Studies, were resounding successes.

Ronald's exceptional intellect, charm, dedication, life enthusiasm, and humanitarian spirit have left an enduring mark on those who met him. His legacy, particularly through his written work in promoting social justice through career guidance, will continue inspiring the field for generations. On a personal level, Ronald not only helped me to discover more about myself but also inspired me to set more challenging goals. His mentorship was pivotal in my academic journey. I am profoundly grateful for the time spent with him and will forever treasure the influence he had on my life.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES OFFERED



Diploma in Gender, Work and Society

Course Coordinator:
PROFESSOR ANNA BORG

INTAKE:
(COHORT YEAR 2022-2024)

Females	Males	Total
4	1	5

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course provides an introductory overview of gender issues and helps students increase their awareness about the impact of gender and its effect on women and men at the individual, family, organisational, political and social levels. It also enables students to analyse various subjects through the gender lens, including issues related to: work, sociology, psychology, social policy, politics, law, economics, health, culture and poverty. This course is offered in collaboration with the Department of Gender and Sexualities, Faculty for Social Wellbeing.

COURSE PROGRAMME

YEAR ONE

GDS1004	Introduction to Gender Studies and Public Speaking
GSD1009	Gender, Sociology and Politics
CLS1209	Gender and Economics
CLS1225	Gender and the World of Work
GDS1002	Gender and Culture
GDS1003	Gender, Poverty and Development

YEAR TWO

CLS1226	Gender and Health
CLS1230	Gender and Research Methods
GDS1005	Gender and Psychology
GDS1010	Gender and Law
CLS1229	Gender and Social Policy
CLS1227	Gender and Organisational Behaviour
CLS1228	Gender and Labour Economics
GDS1007	Media Literacy and Gender Issues
GDS1008	Violence Against Women

2024 CLS GRADUATES

2024 Graduate - Diploma in Gender, Work and Society

Females	Males	Total
4	1	5

Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Honours)

Course Coordinator:

PROFESSOR ANNA BORG

INTAKE:

(COHORT YEAR 2018-2023)

Females	Males	Total
11	3	14

*International Students: 2

(COHORT YEAR 2020-2025)

Females	Males	Total
17	6	23

*International Students: 2

(COHORT YEAR 2022-2027)

Females	Males	Total
9	4	13

(COHORT YEAR 2024-2029)

Females	Males	Total
12	1	13

COURSE OBJECTIVES

As organisations strive to adapt to the ever-increasing challenges of globalisation, the need for skilled and qualified human resource professionals increases. This course, offered in collaboration with the Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy, aims to fill a gap in this much-needed area of specialisation. The curriculum provides students with sound underpinning knowledge and the necessary skills that will enable them to work professionally in settings related to human resources.

COURSE PROGRAMME

YEAR ONE

CLS1107	Sociology of Work
CLS1108	Occupational Psychology
CLS1111	Introduction to Social Science
CLS1112	Academic Skills in Work and Human Resources
CLS1102	Equality at the Place of Work
CLS1103	Employment Law in the Maltese and European Contexts
ECN1200	Introductory Economics for Work and HR

YEAR TWO

CLS1110	Labour Economics
CLS1114	Qualitative Research Methods
MGT1944	Human Resource Management
CLS1104	Organisational Communication
CLS1105	Introduction to Occupational Health and Safety
CLS1109	Industrial Relations
CLS1113	Quantitative Research Methods

YEAR THREE

CLS1106	The Evolving Labour Market
CLS2101	The Recruitment Process
CLS2102	Group Behaviour
CLS2103	Performance Management
ECN2213	Economic Growth and Development
ACC2941	Elements of Financial Management
CLS2104	Social Policy and the Labour Market
CLS2105	Education and the Labour Market
CLS2106	Motivation and Compensation
CLS2107	Collective Bargaining

YEAR FOUR

CLS2108	Training and Development
CLS2109	Work-Life Issues
CLS2111	Career Choice and Development
CLS3104	Employee Involvement and Participation
IOT2301	Ideas and Intrapreneurship
CLS3103	Topics in Occupational Health and Safety
CLS3112	Organisational Design
CLS3113	Topics in Employment and Industrial Relations Regulations
PPL2224	People Development in the Public Sector
CLS3101	Applied Quantitative Research Techniques
CLS3102	Applied Qualitative Research Techniques

YEAR FIVE

CLS3106	Personality at Work
CLS3109	Managing Abuse at the Work Place
CLS3110	Workplace Design and Ergonomics
CLS3114	Applied Topics in Work and Human Resources
CLS3115	Research Process in Work and Human Resources
CLS3116	Dissertation

2023 AND 2024 CLS GRADUATES

2023 Graduate - Diploma in Work and Human Resources

Females	Males	Total
2	2	4

*International Students: 1

2024 Graduate - Diploma in Work and Human Resources

Females	Males	Total
2		2

2023 Graduate - Bachelor in Work and Human Resources

Females	Males	Total
10	3	13

*International Students: 2

LIST OF DISSERTATIONS FOR THE BACHELOR IN WORK AND HUMAN RESOURCES (HONOURS)

Cohort 2018-2023

Title of Dissertation

Exploring the impact of remote working on parents at the environment and resources authority during the COVID-19 pandemic

The disengaging workforce: Causes and remedies of employee disengagement. A local management perspective

Diversity and inclusion in the workplace

Investigating the bases of power: referred to by heads of state schools in Malta in their professional relationship with members of staff

Perceived reasons that influence trade union membership: the Maltese context

Exploring the reward management system within the gaming industry. A case study

The re-integration of incarcerated individuals into the workforce

Uncovering 21st century skills for trade union leaders in Malta

A needs analysis of the HR function in a recruitment services company

Returning to the office post maternity leave: women's experience

Women in managerial positions in the hotel industry: Comparing international hotels to boutique hotels

The impact of technostress on workplace engagement and employee burnout

Employee performance and performance management systems - a case study

Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Honours)

Course Coordinator:

DR LUKE FIORINI

INTAKE:

(COHORT YEAR 2018-2023)

Females	Males	Total
2	11	13

*International Students: 1

(COHORT YEAR 2020-2025)

Females	Males	Total
2	16	18

(COHORT YEAR 2022-2027)

Females	Males	Total
3	7	10

*International students: 1

(COHORT YEAR 2024-2029)

Females	Males	Total
0	7	7

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course aims to equip participants with the fundamental concepts and skills necessary for promoting and effectively ensuring health and safety in the workplace. It seeks to develop essential investigative and analytical competencies to help identify, evaluate, and mitigate workplace hazards. Additionally, the course emphasizes the importance of risk reduction principles in managing occupational hazards and unsafe practices. Furthermore, it explores the psycho-social aspects of workers and workplace environments, highlighting their impact on the occurrence and nature of occupational hazards and diseases.

COURSE PROGRAMME

YEAR ONE

CLS1314	Academic Skills in Occupational Health and Safety .
CLS1315	Physical Sciences in Safety, Health and the Environment
CLS1316	Organisational Behaviour
CLS1317	Work, Industrial Relations and the Business Environment
CLS1318	The Promotion of Health and Wellbeing at Work
CLS1319	Biological Principles in Health, Safety and Occupational Toxicology
CLS1320	Risk Management and Principles of Control

YEAR TWO

CLS1321	Occupational Safety
CLS1322	Health and Safety Statistics and Epidemiology
PBL1020	Health and Safety Legal Framework
CLS1206	Research Methods and Design
CLS1323	Ergonomics and Human Factors
CLS1324	Fire Safety and the Management of First Aid
CLS1325	Investigative Skills and Occupational Safety Practice

YEAR THREE

CLS2301	Gender, Age, Race and Disability
CLS2302	Occupational Hygiene
PBL2016	Topics in Health and Safety Law
CLS2303	Occupational Health
CLS2304	Environmental Health Management: Policy and Legislation
CLS2305	Health and Safety Management and Supervisory Skills
CLS2306	Practical Skills and Application

YEAR FOUR

CLS2307	Properties of Materials, New Technologies and Technical Drawing
CLS2308	Health and Safety Audits
CLS2309	Applied Occupational Safety and Health
CLS3301	Supported Study-Unit in Occupational Health and Safety
CLS3302	Personal Development, Ethics and Ability to Train Others
CLS3303	Advanced Practical Skills and Application
CLS3101	Applied Quantitative Research Techniques
CLS3102	Applied Qualitative Research Techniques

YEAR FIVE

CLS3304	Topics in Applied Occupational Safety and Health
CLS3305	Occupational Incident and Accident Investigation
CLS3306	Occupational Health and Work Performance
CLS3307	Synoptic Study-Unit
CLS3308	Dissertation
IOT3100	Creative Thinking and Innovation

2023 AND 2024 CLS GRADUATES

2023 Graduates - Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety

Females	Males	Total
1	0	1

2024 Graduates - Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety

Females	Males	Total
0	2	2

2023 Graduates - Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety

Females	Males	Total
3	7	10

*International students: 1

LIST OF DISSERTATIONS FOR THE BACHELOR IN OCCUPATIONAL
HEALTH AND SAFETY (HONOURS)

Cohort 2018 – 2023

Title of Dissertation

Police officers injured whilst on duty: Managing the health and safety risks faced by police officers

The challenges encountered by employers in ensuring a healthy and safe workplace

The hospitality industry workers in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic

The state of Health and Safety in the Maltese construction industry - perceptions of Health and Safety professionals

Analysing psychological risk factors in the Malta Police Force; From the police constable perspective

Attitudes towards sun protective measures in the construction industry

Risks faced by Serbian workers in the construction industry

The occupational risks of using abrasive blasting in the ship and yacht repair industry

Exploring the work-life balance of members of the Malta Police Force

The importance of fire safety considerations at design stage for multi-story car parks

Occupational stress amongst nurses in a psychiatric setting

Smartphone use at the workplace and its impact on Occupational Health and Safety

Critical analysis of risk management within confined spaces

Absenteeism amongst bank employees in Malta: the impact of work-related stress

Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development

Course Coordinator:

PROFESSOR MANWEL DEBONO

INTAKE:

(COHORT YEAR 2020-2023)

Females	Males	Total
4	0	4

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Employment is becoming more complex and flexible, and careers less predictable. At the same time, there has been an expansion of education with a particular focus on lifelong learning. People are thus requiring increasing amounts of career-related assistance throughout their whole lives. The Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development, offered jointly by the Centre for Labour Studies and the Faculty of Education, seeks to enhance professional career guidance services in Malta. The programme of studies is designed for applicants in possession of a graduate level of education who wish to work at a professional level in the career guidance field.

COURSE PROGRAMME

YEAR ONE

CLS5101	Sociology of Work
CLS5102	The Labour Market
COU5401	Skills in Vocational Guidance and Counselling for Career Guidance Practitioners
EDS5602	Guidance Theories, Models and Strategies
CLS1206	Research Methods and Design
CLS5103	Placement in Career Guidance Settings
CLS5104	Career Guidance Tools
CLS5110	Service Provision for Different Client Groups

YEAR TWO

EDS5608	Career Guidance Practice
EDS5603	Professional Development
EDS5604	Career Guidance Management
EDS5606	Career Development and Lifelong Learning
CLS5107	The Workplace
CLS5111	Applied Quantitative Techniques for Career Guidance
CLS5112	Applied Qualitative Techniques for Career Guidance

YEAR THREE

EDS5609	Dissertation
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2024 CLS GRADUATES

2024 Graduates – Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development

Females	Males	Total
4	0	4

LIST OF DISSERTATIONS FOR THE MASTER IN LIFELONG CAREER
GUIDANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Cohort 2020 – 2023

Choosing a new career: Exploring the needs and motivations of graduate employees changing their careers in Malta

Analysing the career guidance needs of persons with a refugee background

The transition of Maltese military retirees to new careers after twenty-five years of service

Green guidance: enhancing the role of career guidance in Maltese state secondary schools

Master of Science in Work and Organisational Behaviour (by Research)

Course Coordinator:

DR LUKE FIORINI

INTAKE:

(COHORT YEAR 2024-2027)

Females	Males	Total
5	3	8

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The Master of Science in Work and Organisational Behaviour (by Research) allows students to develop advanced knowledge, skills and abilities related to work, human resources or health and safety. This research-based programme enables students to explore topics of interest in-depth, fostering independent inquiry and academic development. The curriculum consists of two units: one focusing on research methods and the other dedicated entirely to the thesis. Research proposals must align with the expertise of the resident academic staff at the Centre for Labour Studies, covering areas relevant to work and organisational behaviour.

COURSE PROGRAMME

YEAR ONE

CLS5201	Research Methods for Work and Organisational Behaviour
CLS5202*	Dissertation

*Work on the dissertation is expected to start in Semester 1 of academic year 2024-25 and continue up to the end of Semester 1 of academic year 2026-27.

SECTION 6

RESEARCH EFFORTS



Research Work and Publications of CLS Staff

PROFESSOR GODFREY BALDACCHINO

- Baldacchino, G. (2024, March 29). *The road to green is paved with good intentions, but nobody likes change: Expect serious resistance along the way*. Greening the Islands. <https://greeningtheislands.org/the-road-to-green-is-paved-with-good-intentions-but-nobody-likes-change-expect-serious-resistance-along-the-way/>
- Baldacchino, G (2024). Some random reflections on higher education institutions in small islands. In H. Henderson & R. Alexander (Eds.), *Higher education institutions in small islands* (pp. xv-xxv). Bristol University Press.
- Baldacchino, G. (2024). Enter a virus. In: S. Roberts, H. DeShong, W. Grenade & D. Devonish (Eds.), *COVID-19 and the Caribbean: Interdisciplinary perspectives: Vol I-II* (pp. vii-xi). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Baldacchino, G., & Debono, M. (2024). *Strengthening collective bargaining through policy initiatives: concrete policy initiatives that could strengthen (multi-employer) collective bargaining in Malta*. Brussels: UNI Europa.
- Baldacchino, G., & Caruana, S (2024) Sport tourism in Malta: Getting off the beach. In: D. Van Rheenen, O. Naria, R. Melo & C. Sobry (Eds.), *Sport tourism, island territories and sustainable development* (pp. 111-122). Cham: Springer.

- Baldacchino, G., Shikova, N., & Redmond, J. (2024). Beyond Ellis Island: Unpacking the negativity around contemporary migration. *Folk, Knowledge, Place*, 1(2).
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- Baldacchino, G., Brincat, J.M., & Camillieri, A. (2024) House names in Gozo. *Perspettivi*, 5, 61-92.
- Baldacchino, G. (Ed.). (2024). *Archipelago Tourism Revisited: Core-Periphery Dynamics After the Pandemic*. Taylor & Francis.
- Baldacchino, G. (2023). Worker education in Malta: unfreezing, changing, refreezing. In L. A. Fiorini, (ed.), *Centre for Labour Studies : Biennial Report : 2021-2022*, 24-36.
- Baldacchino, G. (2023). *Line islands, island lines*. <https://someislands.com/Godfrey-Baldacchino>
- Baldacchino, G (2023). Foreword. In S. Roberts, W. Grenade, D. Devonish & H. DeShong (Eds.), *COVID-19 and the Caribbean: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (2 volumes).
- Baldacchino, G., Aquilina, K., Camillieri, E. J., De Barra, Z., Galea, A., Lanigan, A. L., ... & Zammit, D. (2023). Communicating identities: A sociology of house names in Malta. *Xjenza Online*, 11(1), 20-34.
- Baldacchino, G., & Vella, N. C. (2023). Island Tourism and Archaeology. In S.M. Fitzpatrick, & J. Erlandson (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Island and Coastal Archaeology* (online ed, Oxford Academic, 16 Aug. 2023).
- Baldacchino, G., & Basheska, E. (2023). Investment Migration and Subnational Jurisdictions. In: DV. Kochenov, & K. Surak (Eds.). *Citizenship and Residence Sales: Rethinking the Boundaries of Belonging* (pp. 510-534). Cambridge University Press
- McMahon, E., & Baldacchino, G. (2023). Considering suitable research methods for islands. *Geographical Research*, 61(1), 93-95.

PROFESSOR KRISTA BONELLO RUTTER GIAPPONE

- Külcür, R., Bonello, K., Brown, M., Sultan Baysan, S., Demir, T., Patón-Romero, J. D., Aurelija Novelskaitė, A., Grinevica, L., and Showunmi, V. (2024). Voices in academia and beyond: an exploration of European researchers' narratives using a decolonising lens. *Postcolonial Directions in Education*, 13(1), 1-54.
- Eurofound (2024), *Social governance of the Recovery and Resilience Facility: Involvement of the national social partners*, National social partners and policymaking series, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. [contributor]
- Bonello, K. (2024). Book review: *Bridging Knowledge Cultures. Rebalancing Power in the Co-Construction of Knowledge*, ed. Walter Lepore, Budd L. Hall, and Rajesh Tandon. *Convergence: An International Adult Education Journal*, 45(2), 299-304.
- Bonello Rutter Giappone, K. (2024). Book review: Kenneth Wain, *Lifelong Learning in Malta: Towards the Learning Society*, Faculty of Education, University of Malta, 2024. *Malta Review of Educational Research*, 18(2), 540-545.
- Bonello, K., & Wånggren, L. (2023). *Working Conditions in a Marketised University System: Generation Precarity*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bonello Rutter Giappone, K., Vella, D., Aphrodite, A., Marla, E., Cutajar, N., Brellas, I., Caruana Montaldo, L., and Ntelia, R. (2023). "Valletta: Streets of History: Documenting the Process of Developing a Location-Based Game in the area of Maltese History and Culture". DiGRA Proceedings

PROFESSOR ANNA BORG

- Borg, A., & Camilleri, L., (2024). *Perceptions and Attitudes of Women and Men in Malta towards Work-Life Balance: With a Specific Focus on Family Size*. National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

- Borg, A. (2024). *Progress on Gender and Equality Budgeting within the European Union. Malta Report*. The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality. Sweden 18-29 November 2024.
- Fiorini, L. A., Debono, M. & Borg, A. (2024). Members' and non-members' perceptions of trade unions in Malta. *E-Journal of International and Comparative Labour Studies*, 13(4),76-109.

PROFESSOR MANWEL DEBONO

- Fiorini, L. A., Debono, M., & Borg, A. (2024). Exploring Trade Union Perceptions Among Members and Non-members in Malta. *E-Journal of International and Comparative Labour Studies*, 13(2), 76-109.
- Hooley, T., Thomsen, R., & Debono, M. (2024). A legacy of solidaric critique and hope for a better world: A meditation on the scholarly contribution of Ronald Sultana. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, 52(1), 10-24.
- Baldacchino G. & Debono, M. (2024). Strengthening collective bargaining through policy initiatives – Case of Malta. In S. De Spiegelaere, *Time for action! How policy can strengthen (multi-employer) collective bargaining in Europe*. UNI Europa – The European Services Workers Union.
- Debono, M. (2023). Trade unions and the protection of migrant workers in Europe: Barriers, approaches and interventions. *e-Revista Internacional de la Protección Social, Numero extraordinario 2023*, 92-110.
- Debono, M. & Garzia, C. (2023). Trade union members' experiences and attitudes towards working from home during the pandemic. *Sustainability*, 15, 1953, 1-22.
- Debono, M. & Fiorini, L. (2023). Malta: Trade union resilience in a changing environment. In J. Waddington, T. Muller, & K. Vandaele (Eds.), *Trade Unions in the European Union*. Peter Lang Publisher (pp.763-798).
- Debono, M. (2023). Strengthening HR and Labour Market expertise: The development and impact of the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources Honours Programme. In L. Fiorini (Ed.), *Centre for Labour Studies - Biennial report 2021-2022* (pp. 53-61). University of Malta.

Debono, M. (2023). Enhancing professional standards in career guidance: The Postgraduate Programme in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development and its impact on graduates. In L. Fiorini (Ed.), *Centre for Labour Studies - Biennial report 2021-2022* (pp. 45-52). University of Malta.

Debono, M. & Garzia, C. (2023). *Covid-19 impact on the employment conditions of women, youth, people with disabilities, and atypical workers - Key findings*. General Workers Union.

DR LUKE FIORINI

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Nowrouzi-Kia, B., Haritos, A.M., Bao-Zhu, S.L., Atikian, C., Fiorini, L.A., Gohar, B., Howe, A., Li, Y., & Bani-Fatemi, A. (2024). Remote work transition amidst COVID-19: Impacts on presenteeism, absenteeism, and worker well-being - A scoping review. *PLoS ONE* 19(7): e0307087.

Ferranti, R., & Fiorini, L.A. (2024). The State of Occupational Health and Safety in the Maltese Construction Industry and the Way Forward. *Xjenza Online*, 12(2), 105-120.

Fiorini, L.A., Camilleri, L., & Gauci, M. (2024). Occupational accidents in Malta and the role of the occupational health and safety authority: A twenty-year analysis. *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Safety*, 8(2), 12-30.

Nowrouzi-Kia, B., Fiorini, L.A., Avila, S., Atikian, C., Jain, M., & Gohar, B. (2024). Examining the antecedents and conceptualisations of presenteeism and absenteeism in the workplace and its impact on teleworkers: a scoping review protocol. *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Safety*, 8(1), 14-21.

Fiorini, L.A. (2024). Remote workers' reasons for changed levels of absenteeism, presenteeism and working outside agreed hours during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sage Open*, 14(1).

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- Fiorini, L.A. (2024). *Malta: Addressing challenges to mental health in Europe: trends and services*. Eurofound. [unpublished]
- Fiorini, L.A. (2024) *Peer Country Discussion Paper – Malta. Peer Review on Legislative and enforcement approaches to address psychosocial risks at work in the Member States*. European Commission / ICF.
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- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound (2024). *Intercept Project - Fostering employment in green industries*. MT-2021-40/3462, Eurofound
- Rizzo, S., & Fiorini, L. (2024). *Developments in Working Life 2023*. Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A. (2023 – 2024). *Reports on the implementation of the Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages in Malta*. European Trade Union Institute (ETUI). (Four reports). [unpublished]
- Fiorini, L.A. (2023). Musculoskeletal pain amongst teleworkers: frequency and associated factors. *Human Factors and Ergonomics in Manufacturing & Service Industries*, 33(5), 357-365.
- Debono, M., & Fiorini, L.A. (2023). Trade Unions in Malta. In J. Waddington et al – *Trade Unions in Europe*. Pages 763 – 798. Peter Lang.

- Fiorini, L.A. (2023). Remote workers' perceived health during the COVID-19 pandemic: an exploratory study of influencing factors in the IT and communications sector in Malta. *Industrial Health*, 61(5), 342-356.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound (2023). *Purchase of electric vehicles scheme*. MT-2022-1/3312, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound (2023). *Free public transport in Malta*. MT-2022-40/3309, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound (2003). *ESG grant to facilitate good governance practices*. MT-2023-31/3304, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound (2023). *In-Work benefit for employees with atypical working hours*. MT-2022-52/3156, Eurofound.
- Fiorini L.A., & LaFerla F. (2023). *The Development of Health and Safety in Malta: The Contribution of the Centre for Labour Studies, University of Malta*. Centre for Labour Studies Biennial Review 2021-2022.
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- Rizzo, S., & Fiorini, L.A. (2023). *Developments in Working Life 2022*. Eurofound.
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- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound (2023). *Additional cost of living adjustment (COLA) payment*. MT-2022-49/3032, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound (2023). *Schemes to enhance digitalisation amongst enterprises*. MT-2022-27/3033, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound (2023). *Liquidity support guarantee scheme for organisations impacted by the war in Ukraine*. MT-2022-25/3154, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound (2023). *Liquidity support guarantee scheme for importers of fuel and oil*. MT-2022-25/3155, Eurofound.
- Fiorini, L.A., & Eurofound (2023). *In-work benefit for employees with atypical working hours*. MT-2022-52/3156, Eurofound.

Eurofound Contract

In 2023 and 2024, the Centre for Labour Studies (CLS) produced numerous deliverables as requested by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions (Eurofound). As a member of the Network of Eurofound Correspondents (NEC), the CLS prepares reports on Malta upon request. This network includes correspondents in all EU member states and Norway.

The NEC focuses on four themes: working conditions and sustainable work; industrial relations and social dialogue; employment and labour markets; and living conditions and quality of life. While some of the reports prepared by the CLS are published on the Eurofound website, others are not. Contributions published in 2023 and 2024 included annual reports on industrial relations, social dialogue and working life in Malta, and updates of Eurofound's Policy Watch database. This database initially tracked policies related to COVID-19, but later included policies related to local responses to the war in Ukraine, policies to combat inflation and policies related to the green transition. Other publications covered company restructuring and living conditions in Malta.

Eurofound draws on data from unpublished reports to produce comparative European studies on selected topics. During the period in question, the CLS prepared national reports on a wide range of issues, including the minimum wage, collectively agreed pay, social protection for the self-employed, job quality and climate change, older workers, remote working, the integration of Ukrainian refugees, and the involvement of social partners in the European Semester. Other topics covered included the long-term impact of COVID-19 measures, changes in working time, the four-day working week, ICT-enabled antisocial behaviours, independent living, the planned decarbonisation of residential heating, and the sectoral

impact of the twin transition. Additionally, the CLS examined informal care, undeclared work, vulnerable workers, the role of social partners in national policymaking, and trends and services related to mental health. Other reports dealt with the representativeness of specific sectors, such as the postal, transport, graphical, temporary agency, maritime, ports, and inland waterway sectors.

In order to produce these reports, the Centre for Labour Studies has put together a team of researchers, some of whom are resident staff, whereas others are from outside the University of Malta. The CLS would like to thank all the individuals who worked on this project during this period and included:

- Dr Luke A. Fiorini (Overall project manager and author)
- Ms Christine Garzia (Deliverable coordinator and author)
- Ms Christine Scerri (Deliverable coordinator and author)
- Prof Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone (Author)
- Prof Anna Borg (Author)
- Mr Gilmour Camilleri (Author)
- Mr Louis Grech (Author)
- Prof Vincent Marmara (Author)
- Ms Wilma Plaehn (Author)
- Mr Saviour Rizzo (Author)
- Mr Charles Tabone (Author)
- Dr Melchior Vella (Author)

The CLS would also like to thank the Project Support Office at the UM, particularly Ms Natushka Mulvaney and the Finance Office for their valuable support. Special thanks also go out to the social partners that regularly provide the CLS with data.

SECTION 7

DISSERTATION SYNTHESIS





Mr Franklin Grima

Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons)

Attitude towards sun exposure behaviour in the construction Industry

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The Maltese Island averages around 3,000 hours of sunshine every year. Statistics show that there is an increase in invasive malignant melanoma on the Maltese islands with 81 cases reported in 2019 compared to 50 cases reported in 2010 (Azzopardi & Ministry for Health, 2022). The National Audit Office identified that heat is correlated with the number of accidents in the construction industry (NAO, 2016). This makes exposure to ultraviolet radiation an important factor to consider for any outdoor worker. Despite this, there is limited literature and research on the subject. Furthermore, studies which analysed health and safety at construction sites in Malta did not consider risks introduced by the sun and heat (Micallef, 2012; Grima, 2008). This study aimed to close the gap by determining the level of awareness of sun-protective behaviour of construction workers, if recommended control measures are adhered to and the factors which might affect the level of adherence to the recommended control measures.

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of this study and test the hypotheses deduced, a cross-sectional research design which used quantitative research methods was employed as outlined by Bryman (2016). Data was gathered through the means of questionnaires.

The questionnaire was designed to collect 3 types of data: Demographics, Awareness of sun exposure risks and Adherence to recommendations and legislation. To determine the awareness of sun exposure risks, the Sun Exposure Protective Index was used. This index is a published instrument to measure individuals' sun exposure and protection behaviours (Detert et al., 2015). While to determine the level of adherence, a set of questions was compiled following a review of legislation and guidance from different authorities.

KEY FINDINGS

The key finding from the study can be summarised as follows:

- There is a lack of literature on occupational sun exposure in the construction industry both locally and abroad.
- Although data is collected on the number of new malignant melanoma cases, there are no records available from Maltese institutes on the prevalence of other diseases and injuries related to sun exposure in the occupational setting. Furthermore, no demographic data is available in relation to any injury and/or disease sustained from sun exposure. As such, it is not possible to study or determine if any of these diseases are occupationally related.
- Although guidance is available, there is no specific legislation addressing sun exposure risk. Legislation related to PPE refers to equipment which is not in line with international recommendations for protection from sun exposure.

- Through the data collected from the Sun Exposure Protection Index, this study showed that most of the construction workers sampled are aware of the risks imposed from sun exposure and the precautions required, which were adhered to in their leisure and personal lives. However, most of the construction workers sampled did not adhere to the recommended guidelines and legislation at construction sites.
- The author was not able to conclude that any specific socio-demographic factors were significantly associated with levels of sun-protective behaviour and awareness. However, our results show that the use of equipment such as sun-glasses, wide-brimmed hats and long-sleeved shirts, is significantly associated with the provision of the same equipment to construction workers from the employer.

CONCLUSION

Despite its limitations, the study provides insight into the current situation of sun-protective behaviours and awareness on the Maltese islands.

It recommended that:

- Further studies with a larger sample size are carried out
- To incorporate basic sun awareness training in the construction skills card training
- The data collection should be carried out regularly by a health institute to be able to determine if outdoor occupations are a contributor to the prevalence of such diseases.
- To include wide-brimmed hats and neck flaps in S.L. 424.21 which lists required PPE for specific hazards.

In conclusion, the study suggests that authorities should collect more data on injuries and diseases arising from sun exposure and that further studies with a larger sample size are to be carried out to be able to determine the level of awareness of sun-protective behaviour of all construction workers in Malta and determine whether additional controls are required to reduce this risk.

The thesis was supervised by Mr Charles Micallef

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Ms Raisa Marie Ferranti

Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons)

The state of occupational health and safety in the Maltese construction industry:

Perceptions of Occupational Health and Safety Practitioners

AIM OF THE STUDY

This study sought to examine the current state of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) in Malta's construction industry from the perceptions of OHS practitioners. It aimed to analyse how OHS in the sector has evolved over the years, identify the issues and challenges faced by practitioners, and explore potential improvements to enhance OHS standards. The research focused on the perspectives of OHS practitioners employed within the local sector, as related studies on the matter are limited.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional qualitative design was employed using semi-structured interviews to gather data. Participants were selected based on specific criteria, including holding a minimum of an OHS diploma and at least two years of experience in the construction industry. Purposeful sampling was used with snowball sampling helping to identify a total of 12 participants. The interviews followed a structured interview guide. Eleven of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, and one was carried out via

phone. The data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), enabling the identification of key themes and subthemes that contributed to a deeper understanding of the research topic.

KEY FINDINGS

Improvements in OHS over time

Participants acknowledged progress in OHS in Malta, highlighting the establishment of the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA) and the enforcement of laws such as Legal Notice 88 of 2016 as key contributors to these improvements, consistent with other findings (Fiorini & La Ferla, 2021; Fiorini et al., 2024). However, they emphasised that more progress is required, especially given the number of fatalities and underreporting of incidents within the construction industry (OHSA, 2011). Additionally, participants pointed to the influence of social media in raising public awareness and driving OHS improvements. Despite these developments, they expressed the view that Malta still lags behind countries like the UK in terms of OHS standards and practices.

Issues and challenges OHS practitioners face

Four main themes emerged from the interviews: the influence of stakeholders (clients and contractors), the role of OHS practitioners, training, and the challenges associated with foreign workers.

1. **Stakeholders in the Industry:** Clients and contractors have a significant impact on OHS on construction sites. The level of commitment to safety varies considerably, particularly between large and small contractors. Some clients prioritise cost over safety, which complicates the implementation of OHS measures. Larger contractors are generally more invested in safety than smaller ones (European Commission, 2011; OHSA, 2013).
2. **Role of OHS Practitioners:** Participants expressed frustration over the lack of clear guidelines and support from regulatory bodies, with some OHS practitioners experiencing conflicts of interest, particularly when dependent on contractors for employment. The role of Project

Supervisors (PSs) is often complicated by inconsistent communication with the OHSA, and many PSs face legal risks despite their efforts (Times of Malta, 2022; Gauci & Magri, 2022).

3. **Training and Awareness:** A significant gap in training, especially in high-risk activities such as working at heights was identified. Many workers lack adequate hazard awareness, leading to frequent accidents. This is consistent with findings from OHSA (2022) and Nadhim et al. (2016).
4. **Foreign Workers:** The influx of foreign workers presents additional challenges, including language barriers, cultural differences, and inadequate training. Migrant workers often face poor working conditions and safety risks, further complicating the enforcement of OHS standards (Debono & Vassallo, 2020).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING CONSTRUCTION SECTOR SAFETY

Participants offered several recommendations for improving OHS in the Maltese construction industry: stakeholders (clients and contractors), the roles of OHS practitioners, training and awareness, foreign workers, collaboration, and enforcement.

1. **Stakeholders:** It was recommended that OHS conditions be incorporated early into the tendering process, with specific provisions for safety measures such as edge protection, fire safety, and first aid stations (European Commission, 2011). Participants also suggested that contractor licensing and blacklisting should be considered.
2. **OHS Practitioners:** More frequent site inspections and clearer competency guidelines for OHS practitioners were mentioned to be required. The Kamra tal-Periti (2019) and NAO (2016) also recommended strengthening oversight and clarifying the qualifications required for PSs.

3. **Training and Awareness:** Participants advocated for more specialised training, particularly for high-risk activities for workers. Studies have shown that tailored safety education significantly reduces injuries (Spangenberg et al., 2002; Greene et al., 2005).
4. **Foreign Workers:** Participants highlighted the importance of addressing challenges associated with the increasing influx of foreign workers. A key issue identified was language barriers, emphasising the need for better integration of non-native workers. This could include initiatives such as language training programs to facilitate communication (O'Connor et al., 2014; Debono et al., 2013).
5. **Collaboration and Enforcement:** Enhanced collaboration among regulatory authorities and stronger enforcement of OHS regulations were considered crucial for improving compliance with safety standards and regulations (NAO, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This study examines the state of OHS in Malta's construction industry, identifying key stressors and challenges faced by OHS practitioners. While improvements have been made, participants highlighted a lack of commitment to safety from both clients and contractors, and insufficient training for workers, particularly migrant workers. Licensing contractors, integrating OHS requirements early in the project stages, and improving collaboration between governmental bodies were recommended. The study emphasises the need for clearer guidelines, better training, and stronger enforcement to enhance safety standards in the industry (Nadhim et al., 2016).

This thesis was supervised by Dr Luke Fiorini

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This dissertation was published: Ferranti, R., & Fiorini, L.A. (2024). The State of Occupational Health and Safety in the Maltese Construction Industry and the Way Forward. *Xjenza Online*, 12(2), 105-120.



Mr Russel Bugeja Berry

Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Hons)

Exploring the impact of remote working on parents at the Environment and Resources Authority during the Covid-19 pandemic

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

Working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic had a substantial impact on parents working at the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA). International and local research indicated that working from home during the pandemic reduced commuting stress, enhanced productivity, and facilitated a better work-life balance, particularly improving the mental health of working parents (Eurofound, 2020; Fiorini, 2023; Reynolds, 2021; Tomei, 2021), it also led to increased disruptions, feelings of isolation, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life, which in turn increased stress levels and, in some cases, resulted in burnout. Furthermore, research found that although working parents appreciated the flexibility to manage work and family commitments, at times they felt undervalued and compelled to work even when unwell (Grant Thornton, 2020; ILO, 2020).

Given that the majority of ERA employees were in this “rush hour of life” phase, referring to age groups between 30 and 49, this study aimed to analyse and better understand the impact that remote work had on parents throughout the pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach was adopted to gain in-depth insights into the experiences of parents at the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) during the pandemic. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight professional officers, selected through purposive sampling (Bryman, 2012), which allowed for the deliberate selection of participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research question. The interviews, held either in-person or via Microsoft Teams, facilitated open discussions and enabled a deeper exploration of the participants' experiences. The sample included both male and female participants aged between 30 and 49, representing the “rush hour of life” phase (Zannella et al., 2018). Such diversity ensured a range of perspectives on how working from home impacted the work-life balance and professional visibility of the participants during the pandemic. This approach provided valuable qualitative data to address the key research question; ‘What is the impact of remote working on parents at ERA during the COVID-19 pandemic?’

KEY FINDINGS

The key findings of this research were centred around two main themes:

- The influence of remote work on personal and family aspects; and
- The impact on work-related factors.

INFLUENCE ON PERSONAL AND FAMILY ASPECTS

The findings revealed that the absence of commuting significantly impacted the personal and familial lives of ERA parents. Participants reported enhanced flexibility and work-life balance, as time previously spent commuting was being utilised for family activities, resting, or doing household chores (Eurofound, 2021). Fathers, in particular, reported stronger bonds with their children due to increased interactions and participation with their children through home-schooling. On the other hand, mothers appreciated the ability to care for young children without having to rely on childcare services. However, many parents noticed

changes in their children's behaviour during the lockdown, leading to increased concern about the mental health effects of social isolation on their children (Dorn et al., 2021). Moreover, the increased responsibilities of managing both work and familial responsibilities under one roof often resulted in difficulty achieving balance. Parents themselves also felt isolated, as restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 limited their interactions with extended family and colleagues. These findings highlighted how this social isolation led to feelings of loneliness and anxiety, demonstrating the psychological impact of remote work on parents.

IMPACT ON WORK-RELATED FACTORS

The research indicated that working from home during the pandemic led to both positive and negative outcomes in terms of professional performance and productivity. Many parents found that they could concentrate better at home due to fewer interruptions, resulting in increased productivity (Eurofound, 2020). However, the blurred boundaries between work and personal life during the pandemic created difficulties in disconnecting from work, leading to stress and burnout for some participants. Managing multiple roles simultaneously, such as being both an employee and a parent, added to these challenges (Eurofound, 2021). In cases where parents had young children or needed to care for elderly parents, the pandemic increased family and domestic duties, making it harder to find time for personal care and professional commitments.

Despite these difficulties, the pandemic proved that work could still be effectively managed from home. Participants shared that, in comparison to the office, they experienced fewer disruptions when working remotely, allowing them to meet deadlines more efficiently and reduce the pressure associated with commuting and office politics. Nonetheless, the lack of face-to-face interaction diminished the professional visibility and caused concern about career progression of some participants.

These findings emphasise the connection between personal well-being and work-related factors whilst working from home during the pandemic, highlighting the need for tailored support systems for employees with parental responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

This study uncovered a complex mix of benefits and challenges. Key advantages included time saved from commuting, improved productivity, strengthened family relationships, and enhanced work-life balance. However, these benefits were accompanied by significant challenges, such as increased workloads stemming from school closures and the necessity to work irregular hours resulting in increased stress levels. Furthermore, many parents experienced feelings of isolation from colleagues, negatively impacting their mental health.

In light of these findings, it is crucial for ERA to develop a comprehensive remote work policy that applies to all employees. This policy should address the identified shortcomings of the current remote working practices while maximising long-term benefits. Proposed guidelines must encompass aspects such as technology use, security measures, the right to disconnect, and stipulations regarding in-office presence. By establishing these standards, ERA can better support remote workers, ensure their integration within the Authority, and align with its strategic goals as a national environmental regulator. This proactive approach has the potential to enhance employee well-being, boost productivity, reduce traffic and improve retention post-pandemic ultimately benefiting both the workforce and the mission of the same Authority.

This thesis was supervised by Prof Anna Borg

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Mr Conrad D'Amato

Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Hons)

Investigating the bases of power:

referred to by Heads of State Schools in Malta
in their professional relationship
with members of staff

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

Social scientists have identified social power as an inherent component of any social construct. It is indeed exceedingly difficult to contemplate the development of any human interaction without regard for the power capacity of the participants. Furthermore, it is assumed that if one is acknowledged as having power over others, such authority has to have some form of justification. French and Raven's (1959) and Raven's (1992) further-developed taxonomy, referred to the different manifestations of power as bases of power. This research aimed to investigate the sources of power which Heads of State Schools in Malta turn to so as to effectively manage their subordinates.

METHODOLOGY

The nature of the investigation and the objective set by the above research question, were key determinants for the choices made with regard to the methods and procedures followed throughout the study. Consequently, opting for a qualitative approach was meant so as to more effectively fulfil the exploratory objectives of the study (Braun & Clarke,

2014), specifically an in-depth examination of the decisions and rationale of Heads of State Schools in Malta regarding the sources of power utilised in their professional interactions with staff members.

Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with nine Heads of State Schools. Understandably, this choice of participants provided for a one-sided perspective of the investigated social construct. The adopted method for data analysis was Braun and Clarke's (2006) 'Thematic Analysis'; by means of which themes and patterns relevant to the research question could be systematically discovered from the gathered primary data and then studied and reported (Braun & Clarke, 2014).

FINDINGS

Despite informants having no knowledge of the referred to bases of power, findings indicated the broad employment, frequently simultaneously, of a number of the power sources classified in said taxonomy.

Actually, pursuing adherence by conveying a reasoned explanation was the form of power informants would turn to more regularly so as to ensure their subordinates' compliance. Thus, indicating direct-informational power centrality for Heads of School management of the human resources they were responsible for. Other 'soft' powers, such as one's superior knowledge on specific matters (positive-expert power) have also been referred to frequently, suggesting Heads of State Schools' preference for subtle, informal, less imposing bases of power.

In fact, of the four power sources labelled as legitimate powers, the bases of power which refers to the power assigned to the role of Head of School by the organisation (legitimate-position power), a 'harsh' power, was the least applied. In contrast, interviewees made regular use of legitimate-equity power, based on the equity or compensating norm, which requires one to compensate someone who has suffered or worked hard, or someone who was hurt by one's actions. Likewise, legitimate-dependence power, centred on the social responsibility norm that entails compliance with requests for assistance from someone in need. In point of fact, of the 'legitimate' power bases, the most employed is legitimate-

reciprocity power which is grounded on one's expectation of adherence by the target as a response to the powerholder's past actions in favour of the target or the group.

Participants also discussed how organisational parameters and the lack of resources provided by their employer restrain their ability to adequately sustain their impersonal-reward and coercive powers. Indeed, whereas impersonal-reward power is only occasionally mentioned, personal-reward power is not regarded as a means to attain compliance but rather as a way to strengthen their positive-referent power. As for coercive powers, especially impersonal-coercive power, these are only turned to after other power bases had failed.

It is reasonable to assume that to a certain degree, said limitations influenced their reluctance to use 'harsh' power sources. Moreover, given the need to turn to 'soft' powers, which employment is affected by the powerholders' positive-referent power, findings indicate participants' unwillingness to refer to coercive powers because they recognise the possible negative consequences this could have on their relationships with staff members.

It is noteworthy that so as to enhance their power, informants did not shy away from turning to third parties' power bases, such as when referring to students' dependence.

CONCLUSION

The insights given by the nine participants, have made it possible to better understand the choices of sources of power that Heads of State Schools in Malta make in their efforts to effectively manage their subordinates. Findings have indicated HoS's propensity for forms of power whose employment required a more careful, tactful, laborious approach. However, if successful at achieving adherence, these 'soft' powers could also result in fewer undesirable consequences. Hence, they strived to develop a positive and collaborative work environment grounded on an understanding and respectful professional as well as human relationship.

The research has also brought forth the following proposals for possible changes to current policies and practices:

- Launching a mentoring programme for newly appointed Heads of School.
- Adequately enhancing Heads of State Schools Impersonal-Coercive Power through policy and procedural reforms.
- Having Heads of State Schools focus on curriculum development and human resource management by amending their job description, and
- Recognising social power as an essential area of study for aspiring Heads of School.

This thesis was supervised by Mr Giosue Pianciamore and Prof Manwel Debono

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Ms Christabel Saliba

Master in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development

Green guidance:

Enhancing the role of career guidance
in Maltese state secondary schools

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

This dissertation explored the critical link between climate change and sustainable careers, focusing on how career guidance in Maltese state secondary schools can shape a more environmentally responsible future. It investigated the perceptions and practices of career guidance practitioners regarding sustainability, identifying factors that either support or hinder the integration of eco-friendly principles into their work. The study focused on understanding the subjective experiences of career guidance practitioners, which was crucial for addressing the research questions about how eco-friendly principles are perceived and implemented in career guidance.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this dissertation adopted an interpretive, qualitative approach to explore how sustainability principles are integrated into career guidance practices in Maltese state secondary schools. Interpretivism enabled a deeper exploration of the participants' experiences (Bryman, 2016). Purposive sampling was employed to select 10 participants, including career advisors, guidance teachers, and PSCD teachers, ensuring that the sample consisted of individuals with significant experience in career

guidance. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, mostly conducted in Maltese, to enhance participant comfort, allowing for an in-depth exploration of sustainability integration within career guidance. Following Braun and Clarke's (2013) guidelines, thematic analysis was applied to the transcribed data to identify key patterns and themes. The study resulted in the development of a digital tool, Uncovering Green Guidance – A Practical Manual for Career Guidance Practitioners, designed to support practitioners in incorporating sustainability into their career guidance work. This methodology provided a comprehensive framework for exploring an under-researched area, offering valuable insights into the factors influencing the integration of eco-friendly principles in Maltese secondary schools.

KEY FINDINGS

The findings of this dissertation reveal significant insights into the current state and integration of green career guidance within Maltese state secondary schools. Career guidance practices remain primarily focused on traditional areas such as subject choice, CV writing, and interview skills. Semi-structured interviews uncovered a lack of emphasis on sustainability in career guidance despite widespread acknowledgement of the growing importance of environmental issues. A central theme that emerged from the analysis was the need for a more structured approach to incorporating sustainability into career guidance. Interest in sustainability was expressed, but practitioners often lacked the necessary training and resources to address this topic effectively.

Empowerment emerged as a critical focus in career guidance, with career practitioners emphasising the importance of helping students build confidence and explore career paths that resonate with their personal interests and societal needs. Encouraging students to think critically about their career choices, particularly in relation to broader social and environmental issues, was seen as essential. However, challenges such as student resistance to engaging in career-related discussions and the lack of dedicated time and resources were highlighted. Career guidance practitioners noted the difficulty of engaging in career discussions,

particularly when addressing green career guidance, where students may not fully understand or appreciate sustainability.

Human and time resources are insufficient to deliver more comprehensive career guidance that includes sustainability. This shortage often limits career guidance sessions to basic services, preventing the exploration of emerging green careers or sustainability-focused industries. Additionally, impartiality poses a challenge, as maintaining neutrality while promoting sustainability-focused careers without influencing students' decisions is difficult for practitioners.

To address these challenges, better training and the development of engaging tools were strongly advocated. Training was seen as essential to help career guidance practitioners stay updated on emerging green job opportunities and to equip them with the knowledge required to guide students toward sustainable careers. A structured approach to training was deemed necessary to integrate sustainability into career guidance practices effectively. Furthermore, the introduction of more interactive and experiential tools was suggested to engage students more effectively.

Addressing the challenges of student resistance, limited resources, and a lack of knowledge requires comprehensive training and innovative tools. This approach would significantly enhance the integration of green guidance and empower students to make more environmentally conscious career choices.

CONCLUSION

This research has highlighted crucial aspects of career guidance in Maltese secondary schools, focusing on the potential for enhancing it through green career guidance. However, a significant gap was identified, as participants, while willing and taking steps towards sustainability, revealed inconsistencies in maintaining basic sustainability practices. This study indicates the need for a paradigm shift in career guidance practices within Maltese secondary schools to incorporate sustainability. The findings emphasise the importance of embedding sustainability values, a challenge that requires a fundamental change in approach (Sultana, 2017). Redefining career guidance to incorporate green guidance principles,

as suggested by Irving (2014) and Plant (2015), can promote student engagement and more informed career decisions, contributing directly to climate change mitigation. Continuous professional development for career guidance practitioners is also necessary, ensuring practitioners stay updated on the evolving demands of the green economy (Cedefop, 2021). This study offers an essential step towards an environmentally conscious approach to career guidance, preparing students with the knowledge and values to contribute to a sustainable society.

The thesis was supervised by Prof. Ronald Sultana.

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SECTION 8

CLS ACTIVITIES 2023-2024:

EVENTS, MEETINGS AND MILESTONES



2023

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING: CLS AND VSB

JANUARY 2023



The Centre for Labour Studies and the VSB Technical University of Ostrava, Czech Republic, signed an agreement whereby the two institutions will cooperate on matters related to health and safety education and research.

As part of this agreement, Dr Luke Fiorini lectured health and safety students at the VSB on the health implications of remote working, whereas Dr Ing Lucie Kocurkova educated CLS students on digital risk assessment options. The two entities also perused joint funding opportunities.

PARTICIPATION IN A CONFERENCE ABOUT GOZO'S LABOUR MARKET

JANUARY 2023

Professor Manwel Debono was invited to deliver a presentation about “The evolution of the labour market”, in an online national conference called “Employment and Skills – A Gozitan Perspective” organised by The Gozo Regional Development Authority, Malta.

PERSONALITY AT WORK SEMINAR – CORINTHIA MARINA HOTEL

JANUARY 2023

A practical seminar on personality at work was organised by Dr Luke Fiorini for the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Hons) students.

NEW MEMBER OF STAFF

FEBRUARY 2023

The CLS welcomed its latest member of staff in February, Prof Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone. Krista joined the Centre as a Research Support Officer, and assists the Centre in maximising its research output.



WORKER PARTICIPATION EUROPE (WPE) MEETING

FEBRUARY 2023

Dr Luke Fiorini, who represents Malta on the European Trade Union Institute's (ETUI) WPE network, attended a related meeting in Brussels in February. Several topics were discussed at the meeting, including the EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages.

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN NETWORK SAFETY AND HEALTH PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS (ENSHPO)

MARCH 2023

Dr Luke Fiorini was appointed as the representative of ENSHPO on the International Ergonomics Association (IEA) Health and Safety Technical Committee. Dr Fiorini was nominated for the post by the Malta Occupational Safety and Health Professionals Association (MOSHPA). Throughout 2023 and 2024, Dr Fiorini attended related meetings.

INTERVIEW ABOUT FOREIGNERS AS A NEW WORKING CLASS

MARCH 2023

Professor Manwel Debono was interviewed by the journalist Matthew Vella for an article called "Foreigners are new working class doing low-paid jobs Maltese no longer want". The article was published on Malta Today (Malta).

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT SEMINAR

MARCH 2023

The CLS held an occupational health and safety management seminar at the Valletta Campus on Saturday 25th March. The seminar was led by Dr Luke Fiorini and included several student presentations on various occupational health and safety management systems as well as a guest presentation by Mr Oswald Armani.



EUROFOUND NETWORK OF EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENTS MEETING

APRIL 2023

Dr Luke Fiorini and Ms Christine Garzia attended the Eurofound Network of European Correspondents annual meeting in Dublin. Since 2005 the Centre for Labour Studies has provided regular reports on the Maltese Labour Market to the European



Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). This is a tripartite EU agency which is located in Dublin. It provides knowledge to assist in the development of social and work-related policies at EU level.



INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR NON-STANDARD WORK

MAY 2023

Professor Manwel Debono was invited to participate in an international workshop on Social Protection for Non-standard Work, organized by the Faculty of Law at the University of Malaga in Spain. The workshop was held on the 11th and 12th of May 2023. He delivered a presentation entitled “The role of trade unions in the social protection of non-standard migrant workers”, in which he discussed some major challenges facing atypical migrant workers in the EU and trade union strategies to protect such workers.

CHAIRING OF PANEL: MARE SUMMIT

MAY 2023

Dr Luke Fiorini Chaired a panel discussion on safety within the construction industry at the MARE National Property Summit held at the Malta Fairs and Convention Centre. The session was entitled, ‘Safety Pays – Improving Safety in Construction’.

RADIO DISCUSSION

MAY 2023

Professor Manwel Debono participated in a radio discussion about “Groups and their dynamics”. The discussion was hosted by Dr George Cremona as part of the educational programme “Vi jew Va?” on Radio Calypso (Malta)

HEALTH AND SAFETY STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN AGORA RADIO PROGRAMME

JUNE 2023

Dr Luke Fiorini, along with Bachelor in Occupational and Safety students Raisa Ferranti and Kevin Agius, and MOSHPA President and CLS alumnus George Steve Darmanin participated in 'Agora', a radio program on Campus FM hosted by Dr Mario Thomas Vassallo. The discussion focused on occupational health and safety in Malta.



STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2026

JUNE 2023

The CLS produced a strategic plan for the years 2023-2026. The strategic plan was modelled on the current UM Strategic Plan and was developed following feedback from CLS academics, administrators and members of the CLS board.

1. Learning and teaching
2. Research and knowledge transfer
3. Societal factors and impact
4. Enterprise and industry feedback
5. National impact
6. International outlook

INTERVIEW FOR *LES ECHOS* ON MIGRATION

JULY 2023

Professor Manwel Debono was interviewed by the journalist Emmanuel Grasland for Les Echos (France). The interview formed part of an article called “Malte, un archipel bousculé par l’immigration massive” (Malta, an archipelago shaken by mass immigration).

BIENNIAL REPORT: 40TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

AUGUST 2023

The latest biennial report, covering the years 2021-2022 was published in August. This issue was particularly special because it celebrated the 40th anniversary of the CLS. The report includes articles by each of the past directors of the CLS that discuss some of the accomplishments of the CLS over the years. The biennial also includes articles in which recent alumni describe their research findings, while the publications and activities during the period 2021-2022 were also described.



PARTICIPATION DURING CONGRESS - TOKYO, JAPAN

SEPTEMBER 2023

Dr Luke Fiorini presented research on mental health, working after hours, working whilst ill (presenteeism) and absenteeism in remote workers at the Joint Congress of International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) – Work Organization and Psychosocial Factors (WOPS) & Asia Pacific Academy for Psychosocial Factors at Work (APA-PFAW), 2023 in Tokyo, Japan. The conference was entitled 'Imagine! Decent Work Beyond COVID-19'.



ANNA BORG: PROMOTION TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

SEPTEMBER 2023

Anna Borg was promoted to associate professor in September. The entire staff of the Centre for Labour Studies congratulates her on this promotion. Well deserved!



THE HISTORY OF WORK CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 2023

On the 13th of October, the Centre for Labour Studies in collaboration with WIPSS held an international conference entitled 'The history of work'. The conference featured speakers from around the globe and was held at the UM Valletta Campus. All members of the CLS staff actively participated in the conference, with Prof Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone forming part of the organising committee. The concluding keynote was delivered by CLS chair, Prof Godfrey Baldacchino.



JEAN PAUL SOFIA PUBLIC ENQUIRY

OCTOBER 2023

Dr Luke Fiorini testified on behalf of the University of Malta during the Jean Paul Sofia public enquiry. Dr Fiorini spoke about health and safety education in Malta and the offerings of the CLS.

KOPERATTIVI MALTA

OCTOBER 2023

Accompanied by Prof Godfrey Baldacchino, students in the 4th year of the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources visited the premises of Koperattivi Malta (KM) in Qormi as part of their study unit on worker participation and employee involvement. The students engaged in a conversation with the President of KM, Louis Zammit and KM CEO Daniel Schembri on the distinguishing features of cooperative societies and their attractiveness as templates for setting up businesses in Malta.



PARTICIPATION IN SEA-EU ACTIVITIES

OCTOBER 2023

Professor Manwel Debono was invited to deliver a presentation on “Career guidance training and challenges in Malta” for a group of foreign and local career advisors attending the SEA-EU Student Advisory Services Staff Week, University of Malta.

PANEL DISCUSSION - ORISTANO, SARDINIA, ITALY

OCTOBER 2023

Professor Godfrey Badacchino participated in a panel presentation entitled, ‘Isole, piccoli stati e relazioni internazionali: Topi che ruggiscono?’ at a seminar organised by Assemblée Nazionale Sarda, Oristano, Sardinia, Italy.

ERGONOMICS SEMINAR

NOVEMBER 2023

On Saturday 4th November, the CLS held a seminar on ergonomics for second-year students of the Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons). The seminar was led by Dr Luke Fiorini and was held at the Corinthia Marina Hotel.



PALUMBO SHIPYARDS VISIT

NOVEMBER 2023

Accompanied by Prof Godfrey Baldacchino and Prof Manwel Debono, Bachelor in Work and Human Resources students visited the Palumbo Shipyards on Saturday 4th November.



ERASMUS+ STAFF TRAINING MOBILITY PROGRAMME

NOVEMBER 2023

Ms Alessia Zahra visited Alexandru Ioan Cuza University (Iasi, Romania) between the 3rd and 10th of November where she shared best practices and expertise on topics related to student and course management and discussed opportunities for further cooperation. Alessia's visit was supported by the Erasmus+ staff training mobility programme.



INVOLVEMENT IN EUROPEAN LABOUR AUTHORITY CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 2023

Prof. Anna Borg led a panel during the conference on the 'Rights at Work: Protecting Workers from Labour Exploitation' organised by the European Labour Authority (ELA) in collaboration with the Department of Industrial and Employment Relation (DIER). The aim of the panel discussion was to get a better understanding of labour exploitation and how it is evolving.



PARTICIPATION IN CAREER GUIDANCE EVENTS IN THE FAROE ISLANDS

NOVEMBER 2023

In November, Professors Ronald Sultana (who has since passed away) and Manwel Debono were invited to participate in a series of meetings on career guidance in the Faroe Islands. They engaged with career guidance professionals, representatives of Glasir (the largest 6th form, vocational and higher educational institution in the Faroes), the University of the Faroe Islands, and the Directorate of Education, among others. The visit culminated in a conference about lifelong guidance and inclusion in the labour market attended by a diverse audience of academics, educators, career guidance practitioners, government officials, and social partners. Professor Sultana gave a presentation entitled “The inclusion of migrants and refugees in the labour market: Career guidance and the newly arrived”, while Professor Debono presented on “Experiences of migrant workers in Malta: Career guidance implications”.



GRADUATION

NOVEMBER 2023

In November the CLS celebrated the graduation of students following the Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons) and Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Hons). The latter course is offered in collaboration with the Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy.



CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

NOVEMBER 2023

Professor Godfrey Baldacchino was appointed as Chair of the CLS board. He succeeded Professor Tanya Sammut Bonnici who occupied the position of Chair from July 2021. The CLS would like to thank Professor Sammut Bonnici for her efforts during her time as Chair. Professor Baldacchino is Professor of Sociology at the Department of Sociology, University of Malta, a past Director of the CLS and has also previously occupied the position of Chair of the CLS board for around ten years.

CHANGE IN CLS PERSONNEL

NOVEMBER 2023

Ms Stephanie Muscat, an Administrative Specialist departed the CLS in November 2023. Stephanie had served as an administrator at the CLS for well over a decade. During her time at the Centre, Stephanie grew both academically and professionally, carrying out her work with diligence and dedication. She is greatly missed. Every ending brings a new beginning, however, and the CLS was pleased to welcome Elisa Kelly Caruana to the CLS administration team.

CLS REPRESENTED AT AN EVENT IN FLORENCE

NOVEMBER 2023

Ms Christine Garzia represented the Centre for Labour Studies at a 2-day event for the atWork4NEETs project on 14 and 15 November at the MAD Murate Art District in Florence. The event was organised by Jobsplus.

2024

WORK-LIFE ISSUES SEMINAR – CORINTHIA SAN ANTON

JANUARY 2024

The fourth-year students following the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Hons) course participated in a seminar that was held at the Corinthia Hotel in Attard as part of the unit on Work-Life Issues delivered by Prof. Anna Borg. The students shared their findings on this subject. Mr George Camilleri, a graduate of the Centre for Labour Studies was a guest speaker during the event.



JUNIOR COLLEGE EXPO

FEBRUARY 2024

Represented by Ms Alessia Zahra and Ms Elisa Kelly Caruana, the Centre for Labour Studies organised a stand at the Junior College Expo. As part of the Expo, a seminar on CLS courses was also organised by the CLS academics.



CLS RESEARCH CONFERENCE - VALLETTA CAMPUS

FEBRUARY 2024

The Centre for Labour Studies (CLS) organised a free public event detailing the findings of original research produced by CLS academics and students. During this conference, Dr Luke Fiorini discussed findings related to perceptions of trade unions in Malta and Prof Manwel Debono discussed the relationship between perceived shop stewards' effectiveness and members' attitudes. Prof. Anna Borg and Prof Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone presented preliminary qualitative findings regarding the working experiences of South Asian third-country nationals in Malta.

Following this, two concurrent sessions were held where recent students of the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Hons) and the Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons) presented findings from their theses. A prize-giving ceremony sponsored by Simonds Farsons Cisk plc and the Farsons Foundation was also organised where awards were given to those with the best dissertations and overall classification.



RADIO DISCUSSION ABOUT MALTESE AND MIGRANT WORKERS

MARCH 2024

Professor Manwel Debono participated in a radio discussion called "Programm 11: Il-Maltin u l-barranin fid-dinja tax-xogħol" (Programme 11: The Maltese and foreigners in the world of work). The discussion formed part of the educational programme Agora on Campus FM (Malta), hosted by Professor Mario Thomas Vassallo.

GENDER AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG POST-DOCTORAL ACADEMICS

MARCH 2024

The Centre for Labour Studies hosted a research seminar, featuring Prof Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone and guest speakers Andrea Sigrún Hjálmsdóttir (University of Akureyri) and Lena Wånggren (University of Edinburgh). The seminar focused on Gender and Work-Life Balance among Postdoctoral Academics.



GRADUATION - MASTER IN LIFELONG CAREER GUIDANCE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

MARCH 2024

In March the CLS celebrated the graduation of Master students in Lifelong Career Guidance, Learning and Development. The course is offered in collaboration with the Faculty of Education.



WOMEN'S DAY PANEL

MARCH 2024

Prof. Anna Borg led one of the panels during the FIDEM Foundation's International Women's Day 2024 conference. The panel discussion focused on the work-family conflict, the existing (inadequate) family policies, the low fertility rate and the gender-caring gaps, among other subjects. Dr Roberta Metsola, the President of the European Parliament, also addressed the conference.



CLS AND OHSA MEMORANDUM AGREEMENT

MARCH 2024

The Centre for Labour Studies and the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA) signed a memorandum of understanding in which the two organisations agreed to work together for mutual benefit.



TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR – CORINTHIA ST GEORGE'S BAY

MARCH 2024

The CLS organised a seminar for a cohort of occupational health and safety students on the topic of organising learning events. The seminar was held at the Corinthia Hotel on Saturday 23rd March and led by Dr Luke Fiorini.



GRAND MASTER'S PALACE VISIT WITH HERITAGE MALTA

APRIL 2024

As part of the Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons), students conduct practical sessions within workplaces. One such session was carried out at the Grand Master's Palace in Valletta. Students were accompanied by Mr Clinton Cutajar, a CLS graduate, and Dr Luke Fiorini. Other visits were organised at Farsons, De La Rue, Crane Currency and Playmobil, amongst others.



EMPOWERING OHS PRACTITIONERS: SETTING HIGHER STANDARDS FOR SAFETY EXCELLENCE - OHSA CONFERENCE

APRIL 2024

Members of staff from the CLS attended the OHSA conference, 'Empowering OHS Practitioners: Setting Higher Standards for Safety Excellence'. Prof. Godfrey Baldacchino, Chair of the CLS board, chaired a session on 'Continuous Professional Development' and contributed to other plenary sessions.

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH (ICOH) - MARRAKESH, MOROCCO

APRIL-MAY 2024

Dr Luke Fiorini attended the 34th ICOH congress held at the Palais des Congres in Marrakesh, Morocco. The conference was held between the 28th April and 3rd May.

PRESENTATION AT AN INTERNATIONAL EVENT FOR PROF RONALD SULTANA

MAY 2024

Professor Manwel Debono delivered a presentation on “Ronald Sultana – The Scholar” in an online international commemoration event entitled “NICEC network meeting: Remembering the legacy of Ronald Sultana”, organised by the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling (NICEC), UK.

PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON HIGHER EDUCATION MAY 2024

Prof Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone and Dr Lena Wånggren presented their paper “Resisting Precarity in UK Universities” at the international workshop *The Alternative University: Seeking Shared Solutions to the Global Higher Education Crisis*, at University College London (UCL).

BEING SEA-EU CONFERENCE - VALLETTA CAMPUS JUNE 2024

Professor Anna Borg and Prof Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone presented research on ‘The Work Experiences of Third Country National Women in Malta on the EU Single Permit’, at the Being SEA-EU Conference. The Conference was organised by the University of Malta, with the European University of the Seas SEA-EU. Professor Godfrey Baldacchino, CLS Chair, also presented having collaborated on the papers ‘Preparing Students For The Future Of

Work: Lessons From Canadian Universities’ with Tashfeen Ahmad, and ‘Blue And Green: Yet To Be Seen? A Turquoise Approach To Education For Sustainable Management’, with Ana Kundid Novokmet.



PEER REVIEW RELATED TO PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS IN EUROPE - BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

JUNE 2024

Dr Luke Fiorini participated in the European Commission event entitled, “Peer review on legislative and enforcement approaches to address psychosocial risks at work in the Member States”, as the independent country expert for Malta. The event was held in Brussels, Belgium.

INVITED TALK ABOUT PRECARIOUS JOBS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

JUNE 2024

Prof Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone and her co-author Dr Lena Wånggren were invited by the British Universities Industrial Relations Association (BUIRA) Scotland and the Glasgow Labour, Employment and Work Network, to deliver their presentation “Generation Precarity”, on precarious jobs in higher education, at the University of Glasgow.

WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 2024

Prof Anna Borg and Prof Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone presented research at the Women's and Gender Studies Conference, 'The Permutations Of "Caring"', organised by the Department of Gender and Sexualities at UM.

Prof Anna Borg delivered a keynote presentation 'Beyond Balance: Gender Insights into Family Size and Work-Life Dynamics in Malta'.

Prof Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone presented research on 'The Local and Transnational Care Roles of Third-Country National Women Working in Malta', with Prof Anna Borg.



INTERNATIONAL ERGONOMICS ASSOCIATION (IEA) CONGRESS - JEJU ISLAND, SOUTH KOREA

SEPTEMBER 2024

Dr Luke Fiorini presented a study on improving nurses' health at the triennial International Ergonomics Association (IEA) Congress in Jeju, South Korea. Whilst at the conference, Dr Fiorini also participated in a meeting of the IEA Health and Safety Technical Committee, of which he is a member.



ATGENDER CONFERENCE - UTRECHT, THE NETHERLANDS

SEPTEMBER 2024

Centre for Labour Studies RSO Prof Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone delivered a presentation with her co-author, Lena Wånggren, at the AtGender Conference 'Gender Studies and the Precarious Labour of Making a Difference', in Utrecht. Their presentation was called 'Gendered and intersectional precarity in the marketised university',

INTERVIEW FOR *DER STANDARD* ON FOREIGN WORKERS

SEPTEMBER 2024

Professor Manwel Debono was interviewed by the journalist Natashca Ickert for Der Standard (Austria) for an article titled: "Ausländer sind seltener langzeitarbeitslos als Österreicher" (Foreigners are less likely to be long-term unemployed than Austrians.).

OPENING LECTURE OF THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN WORK AND ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR COURSE

SEPTEMBER 2024

The CLS opened a brand new course in September 2024, the Master of Science in Work and Organisational Behaviour (by Research). This part-time evening course opened with an introductory lecture and reception. Students will focus on studies related to work, human resources and occupational health and safety.



INTRODUCTORY SESSIONS FOR THE BACHELOR IN WORK AND HUMAN RESOURCES (HONS) AND THE BACHELOR IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (HONS) COURSES

SEPTEMBER 2024

The CLS' two flagship courses opened once more in September 2024. Introductory sessions and receptions were organised to welcome our new students to these part-time evening courses. Academic and administrative members of staff were in attendance. Past alumni of both courses also attended and provided students with advice and experience.



THE EUROPEAN TRADE UNION INSTITUTE (ETUI) INTERNATIONAL EVENT - MALTA

OCTOBER 2024

The CLS in collaboration with the ETUI hosted an international event that brought together European experts in workers' participation. Members of the ETUI's Worker Participation Europe (WPE) Network gathered in Malta to gain insights into the local context.

Professor Godfrey Baldacchino delivered a talk on industrial relations and social dialogue in Malta. Following this, Dr Luke Fiorini and Professor Manwel Debono presented findings from a CLS research project exploring attitudes toward trade unions in Malta. Professors Anna Borg and Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone presented CLS research on female third-country national workers in Malta. Professor Manwel Debono also presented on the role of trade unions in protecting migrant workers across Europe. Dr Luke Fiorini represents Malta on the ETUI's WPE Network and was involved in organising the meeting.



MALTA EMPLOYERS ASSOCIATION (MEA) NATIONAL ROUNDTABLE FORUM

OCTOBER 2024

Dr Luke Fiorini participated in the Malta Employers Association (MEA) National Roundtable Forum entitled, 'Adapting our Labour Market to an Ageing Population'. Dr Fiorini highlighted how improved occupational health and wellbeing would make it possible for more workers to work into older age.



MALTA WOMEN'S LOBBY MEETING - BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

OCTOBER 2024

As the representative of the Malta Women's Lobby, Prof. Anna Borg attended the European Women's Lobby Board meeting in Brussels.

MALTA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PRACTITIONERS ASSOCIATION (MOSHPA) TALK

OCTOBER 2024

The CLS organised a talk for first-year occupational health and safety students about the Malta Occupational Safety and Health Practitioners Association (MOSHPA). The talk was delivered by CLS Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons) alumnus and MOSHPA Secretary General Mr Brian Fenech.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY AUTHORITY (OHSA) VISIT

OCTOBER 2024

Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons) students toured the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA) offices, whilst being introduced to the work of the Authority, its personnel,



and its structure. This was the first time that such a visit was organised as part of the course. Practical sessions were also organised in conjunction with the OHSA, whereby Bachelor students had the opportunity to accompany OHSA inspectors during their visits in a variety of work settings.

INVITED TALK ABOUT PRECARIOUS JOBS IN HIGHER EDUCATION - WARWICK, UK

NOVEMBER 2024

Prof Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone and her co-author Dr Lena Wånggren were invited by the Centre for the Study of Women and Gender at the University of Warwick, in collaboration with Warwick UCU, to present their research on “Precarity and Resistance in the Marketised University”. The event took place at the University of Warwick, UK

INVOLVEMENT IN OHSA EVENT ON DIGITAL WORK

NOVEMBER 2024

Dr Luke Fiorini (Director, CLS) was invited to present at the OHSA’s event, ‘Safe and Healthy Work in the Digital World’. Dr Fiorini gave presentations on robotics, AI,



remote work and platform work and their impact on the safety, health and well-being of workers. He also participated in a panel discussion.

MALTA FREEPORT TERMINALS LTD

NOVEMBER 2024

Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons) students visited the Malta Freeport. Students learnt about how the Freeport operates and the safety measures in place. The students were led by the Freeport OHS team and accompanied by Dr Luke Fiorini.



BBRAVE CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 2024

Prof Anna Borg and Prof Krista Bonello attended the conference 'A Healthier Economy: An Anti-Bullying Perspective', which focused on workplace bullying and how to take a stand against it.

CLS GRADUATION

NOVEMBER 2024

The CLS celebrated the graduation of students from several programmes including the Diploma in Gender, Work and Society (in collaboration with the



Faculty for Social Wellbeing), Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons) and the Bachelor in Work and Human Resources (Hons) (course offered in collaboration with FEMA).



COLOSH PROJECT

NOVEMBER 2024

The CLS is participating in COLOSH, an international initiative co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union - Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education. COLOSH focuses on transforming digital education in Occupational Safety and Health through the innovative COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) approach. By developing digital skills and creating practice-oriented teaching materials, the project aims to enhance the quality of education in the health and safety field. Other partner institutions include VSB Technical University of Ostrava (Czechia), Instituto Politécnico do Porto (Portugal), European University Cyprus, Artesis Plantijn Hogeschool Antwerpen (Belgium), AUVA - Allgemeine Unfallversicherungsanstalt (Austria), and Universidade do Minho (Portugal).

RADIO INTERVIEW

DECEMBER 2024

Dr Luke Fiorini participated in a radio interview, '*Il-haddiema: shubija madatorja fil-unions?*' (workers: mandatory trade union membership?) on the programme, 'One to one' with Michael Briguglio on Campus 103.7 FM.

EDITORIAL BOARD APPOINTMENT

DECEMBER 2024

Dr Luke Fiorini was appointed to the Editorial Board of the IETI Transaction on Ergonomics and Safety Journal. The journal is a peer-reviewed open-access journal focused on the area of Ergonomics and Safety. The International Engineering and Technology Institute (IETI) is a non-profit organisation that promotes innovations in Science, Engineering and Technology across the world.

PALUMBO SUPERYACHT

DECEMBER 2024

Bachelor in Occupational Health and Safety (Hons) students undertook a study visit to the Palumbo Superyacht facility in Cospicua/Senglea where they examined the industrial workspace and observed the protocol regarding safe ship docking. The students were accompanied by Palumbo SY Manager Ing. Simon Zammit and Prof. Godfrey Baldacchino.



APPOINTMENT TO INTERNAL QUALITY REVIEW (IQR) PANEL

2023-2024

Dr Luke Fiorini was appointed to the Internal Quality Review (IQR) Panel of the Periodic Program Review (PPR) for the Faculty of Health Science, University of Malta. The panel reviewed fifteen undergraduate and postgraduate programmes from the Faculty's various departments.

AUTISM ADVISORY COUNCIL

2023-2024

Dr Luke Fiorini represents the CLS within the Autism Advisory Council and participated in various meetings of this body throughout 2023 and 2024.

EUROPEAN NETWORK EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

2023-2024

As Ambassador for Malta on the European Network of Education and Training in Occupational Safety and Health (ENETOSH), Dr Luke Fiorini participated in several related meetings.

CENTRE FOR LABOUR STUDIES BOARD MEETINGS

2023 – 2024

The Centre for Labour Studies held several board meetings throughout 2023 and 2024. The date and location for each board meeting are listed below.

Chair Prof Tanya Sammut Bonnici

Monday 6 February 2023 at 10 am Council Room

Monday 26 June 2023 at 10:30 am University Main Library Boardroom

Vice-Chair Dr Luke Fiorini

Tuesday 10 October 2023 at 10am virtually via Zoom

Chair Prof Godfrey Baldacchino

Thursday 11 January 2024 at 10:am Council Room and virtually via Zoom

Wednesday 8 May 2024 at 10 am Council Room and virtually via Zoom

Vice-Chair Dr Luke Fiorini and Chair Prof Godfrey Baldacchino

Thursday 21 November 2024 at 10 am Faculty of Economics Management and Accountancy Boardroom and virtually via Zoom

SECTION 9

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS



General Expenses

CLSSUPP-01

	Year 2023	Year 2024
Salaries Academic Staff	€209,398	€214,514
Salaries Support Staff	€73,823	€83,170
Operational Expenses	€3,629	€2,948
Total	€286,850	€300,633

BREAKDOWN OF OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURE

	Year 2023	Year 2024
Operational Expenses		
Advertising	-	€100
Books	-	€50
Ceremonies and Exhibitions Venue	-	€100
Computer Equipment	€435	-
Conference Other Expenses	-	€70
Courier	-	-
Employee Travel Insurance	-	€47
Furniture	€991	-
General Expenses	€453	€223
Government Grant - Recurrent	€891	€100
Hospitality	€60	-
Internal Ordering - Conference Unit - Catering Services	-	€1,599
Internal Ordering - Conference Unit - Staff Costs	-	€120
Internal Ordering - IT Services - Sale of Software	-	-
Internal Ordering - Printing Unit - Envelopes	€57	-

External Income and Expenses

Internal Ordering - Printing Unit - Paper	€233	€154
Internal Ordering - Printing Unit - Printing Services	€105	-
Meeting Catering	-	€83
Other Equipment - Non Fixed Asset	€276	-
Printing	€1,019	-
Stationery	-	€402
Deferred Government Recurrent Income	€891	€100
Total	€3,629	€2,948

	Year 2023	Year 2024
Income	-	€8,664
	-	8,664

Expenditure		
Advertising	-	€9,629
Books	-	-
Hospitality	€796	€187
Prizes	-	€500
Sponsorships	€1,000	€500
Subcontracting	€28,057	-
	27,853	9,815

Total External Activities	€27,853	€1,151
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*2023 figures are actual, all 2024 figures are draft.

Eurofound Contract

	Year 2023	Year 2024
Income	€53,937.90	€41,622.90
Expenditure		
Support Basic Salary	€30,124.80	€21,352.81
Expenses	€1,397.16	€116.60
Travel	-	-
Remaining Total	€22,415.94	€20,151.49

Notes

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ISBN: 978-9918-0-1121-6