

Biography Josef Vella

Mr Vella graduated in psychology from the University of Malta in 1997 and furthered his studies through post-graduate training in the social field and with the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

He ventured in trade unionism in 1998 when as an employee at the Foundation of Social Welfare Services he enrolled in Union Haddiema Magħqudin with whom he subsequently became a shop steward.

Vella joined UHM on full-time basis in 2007 as secretary of the Public Entities Section and in October 2011 was elected secretary general.

Under his tenure the union underwent a major restructuring process and in 2015 was rebranded as UHM Voice of the Workers. Apart from a radical overhaul of its statute, the union's organisational structure was modernised to reflect a more managerial approach. This translated to the replacement of the secretary general by a Chief Executive Officer, and the other posts with those of director, assistant directors, and managers.

Another ambitious project embarked under Vella's watch was the embellishment of the union's headquarters in Floriana to have a more accessible building catering for a modern office environment. The project was inaugurated on September 29, 2022 which also marks the date on which the union was established in 1966.

At policy level, Vella was instrumental in the introduction of the Active Labour Market Policy which translated to the introduction of free childcare service some years later, and the concept of tapering of welfare benefits as an incentive for people to come out of long-term unemployment.

Another landmark proposal was launched in 2015 when UHM floated the idea of mandatory trade union membership of low-income workers as part of its efforts to combat precarious employment.