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## Malta's gaming free-for-all blessed by government

Matthew Vella

DOZENS of gaming halls have mushroomed around Malta since 2007 because the Lotteries and Gaming Authority has never issued a single licence to any of these operators.

In a free-for-all ostensibly blessed by government, various individuals have opened gaming shops everywhere because the LGA has not issued licences, despite being empowered to do so.

Nested inside residential areas, and sometimes in the vicinity of schools, some 100 gaming outlets have sprouted relatively unhindered.

All that was required so far was a 'change-of-use' permit from the MEPA for the conversion of old shops into gaming parlours.

According to two leading entrepreneurs who spoke to MaltaToday, in 90% of the cases the LGA never presented an objection to MEPA. "It is this situation that has allowed so many individuals to open up gaming shops everywhere you go, even next to schools and churches, because there are no licence conditions being imposed," Johann Schembri, the director of Pinnacle Gaming which operates Fairplay outlets, said. **page 7 ▶**

## TV host asks MEP candidates for cash against invitation

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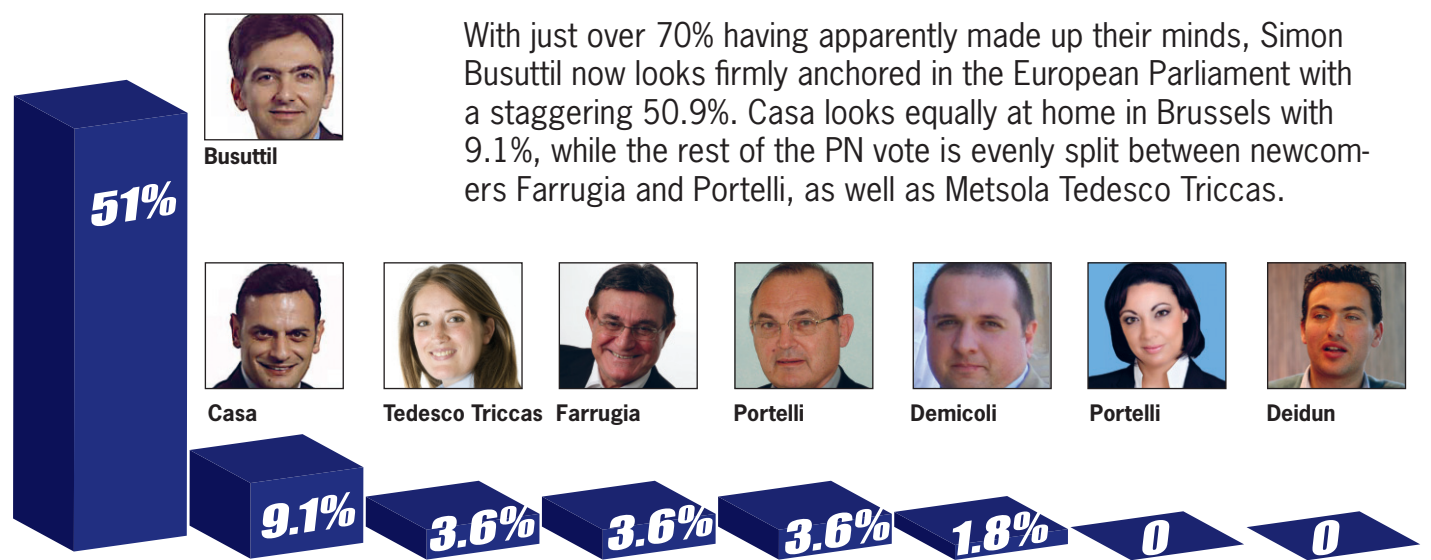
## MEP ELECTION SURVEY

# Busuttill, Scicluna lead

Labour poised for absolute majority in June elections **page 8 ▶**



Economist Edward Scicluna enjoys a threefold advantage over his nearest rival, established MEP John Attard Montalto, while Joseph Cuschieri's personal 'sacrifice' – which enabled Joseph Muscat to take up a seat in parliament – seems to have endeared him to 4.2% of Labourites. As things stand, third place is equally divided among incumbents Grech and Bedingfield, as well as Mizzi and Ellul Bonici.



With just over 70% having apparently made up their minds, Simon Busuttill now looks firmly anchored in the European Parliament with a staggering 50.9%. Casa looks equally at home in Brussels with 9.1%, while the rest of the PN vote is evenly split between newcomers Farrugia and Portelli, as well as Metsola Tedesco Triccas.

**Stephen Cummings**  
 interviewed  
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**Saviour Balzan**  
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**Raphael Vassallo**  
 pages 16-17 ▶



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