



Angelo Xuereb – one of the richest men in Malta?

Joe Gasan is Malta's richest businessman – at least in the public's perception.

According to a random survey conducted by The People Mr Gasan, who's business interests range from cars to insurance, is followed by Anglu Xuereb and the Mizzi family.

Although our survey is in no way meant to reflect the true wealth of these people it gives a clear insight into who the average person on the street thinks is absolutely loaded.

Details of these peoples' exact wealth are hazy but something about their business inter-

ests, or lifestyle, seems to give them away.

Mr Gasan was not too enthusiastic about the results of our vox-pop and wrote to us saying: "I do not really consider actual wealth as important.

"What is much more important, in my opinion is what businessmen contribute to the economy, to the country, to their employees, etc," he wrote.

The Maltese super rich are not in the league of the Sultan of Brunei, or the Queen of England.

They may not be as eccentric as Abraham van Leeuwen dubbed 'Prince Leo of Lignac' who had his toilet seat embroidered in gold on his \$32 million yacht, or the UK company that celebrated Christmas by filling its central heating with several van-loads of bottles of

expensive champagne.

But Gasan, Xuereb, Mizzi and friends enjoy, if that's the word, a public reputation for being absolutely stacked with cash.

Out on the street, our vox pop correspondent did get a few bizarre replies from his interviewees.

One thought that the richest person must be God – obviously rich in spiritual way, but perhaps not needing worldly wealth.

Another respondent, Mario Kennaugh from San Gwann, pointed out: "The richest ones are those that don't appear to be rich".

Large doses of Maltese cynicism were evident in some of the replies. Anthony Grech, from Sliema remarked darkly: "Behind every man's wealth there is a crime."

Others replied "all the ministers" and yet others "all the ex-Ministers" but these were discounted as they are not usually business people in the normal sense.

The question we put to our respondents was: Who do you think the three richest businessmen in Malta are? Here are the results:

Richest: Joe Gasan followed by Anglu Xuereb, the Mizzi Family\*, Louis Farrugia, Tumas Fenech, Hili family\*, Nazzareno Vassallo, the Fino family\*, Dom Mintoff and Ian DeCesare.

\*Although our survey was intended to focus solely on individual wealth, we made exceptions in the cases of the Mizzi, Hili and Fino families, as most respondents were unable to distinguish between individual members of these families. We carried out our survey at numerous sites across Malta to ensure a wide range of views as possible.

## COUNTDOWN TO REMOVAL OF VAT

### THE PEOPLE'S VIEW

**The People's policy is to always to find out what you, the people, think on important issues. So here are your views.**

**Christopher Urry** owner of Ocean Kiosk in Paola: "He's going to remove it, just like that? I don't think it's a good idea. Anyway, if the cash registers remain then nothing will really change. Whatever he does, I don't think it will have much effect."

**Raymond Darmanin** of Petmate in Birkirkara: "I think the new system is

more complicated than VAT, and that took over a year to introduce, so I don't think it's a good idea."

A restaurant owner in St Julians: "I agree with everything Alfred does, so if he thinks that it should be done that way, then it should."

**Ms Vassallo** from Talking Heads Hairdresser in Naxxar: "No I don't think it should be replaced at all. VAT is the fairest system, but I think that it should have been introduced at a lower rate with a small earnings threshold to help smaller businesses."

A video shop owner in

Paola: "Whatever they do, they should do it soon. I haven't even made ten pounds today. We don't know exactly what is going to happen and the uncertainty is bad for business. To be honest, I can't really see much difference between VAT and the new system. What I do know is that it is always us small businesses that invariably lose out whatever happens."

**Alfred Farrugia** from Vinc Store in Valetta: "I certainly agree that it should be removed. The sooner the better. It will save me the accountancy

fees."

**Joe Psaila** from Psaila's Auto Parts in Zebbug: "He may remove it on that date but nobody really knows what is going to happen afterwards. I think we'd be better off sticking with VAT as we've got used to it."

The proprietor of a Valetta photo shop: "The actual date doesn't interest me. You've got to look at the small print. It's like in a car insurance policy. On the surface it looks okay, but once you start looking at the little asterisks you realise that it isn't."

**Franco Mizzi**, who

works for a business in Msida said: "Businesses were against the cash registers, not VAT. I don't believe VAT should be replaced and I have nothing against the tax. However, if there is to be change then it should be done quickly so I agree with the one day changeover. That would be a better alternative than stretching things out."

A shop owner from Sliema who preferred not to be named said: "I disagree. VAT has been very successful all over Europe and is right for Malta as well. I do not think that VAT should be removed."