

Outgoing Prime Minister Joseph Muscat's Labour Party wins the snap election in Malta.

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Analysis

The Labour Party (MLP) of outgoing Prime Minister Joseph Muscat came out ahead in the snap election that took place on 3rd June in Malta. Taking 55.04% of the vote he beat his main rival, the Nationalist Party led by Simon Busuttil, who won 43.68% of the vote.

Together the four other political parties which were standing – the Democratic Party (PD), founded in 2016 by Marlene Farrugia, forged an alliance with the nationalists in this election; Democratic Alternative (AD), an ecologist party led by Arnold Cassola; the Maltese Patriotic Movement (NPM), a nationalist party led by Henry Battistino and the Bidla Alliance (BA) a Christian, Eurosceptic party led by Ivan Grech Mintoff – won 1.29% of the vote and no seats in Parliament.

Turnout, which is always high in the archipelago, was almost the same as that recorded in the previous general election on 9th March 2013: it lay at 92.1% (- 0.9 point).

The outgoing Prime Minister Joseph Muscat decided to convene

a snap election at the beginning of May after attacks made by the blogger Daphne Caruana Galizia, who revealed that Muscat's chief of cabinet Keith Schembri and Energy Minister, Konrad Mizzi (MLP) were the respective owners of the businesses Hearnville Inc and Tillgate Inc, two Panamanian offshore companies that they are said to have acquired thanks to the help of the Panamanian legal firm Mossack Fonseca, which was involved in the international Panama Papers scandal. At the end of April Joseph Muscat's wife was accused of being the owner of part of the Panamanian offshore company Egrant Inc. She has formally denied this. A legal investigation was then launched.

General Election Results of 3rd June in Malta

Turnout: 92.10%

Political Parties	Number of votes won	% of votes cast	Number of seats
Labour Party (MLP)	170 976	55.04	37
Nationalist Party (PN)	1635 696	43.68	28
Democratic Alternative (AD)	2 564	0.83	0
Others	1 429	0.46	0

Source: Maltese Electoral Commission <https://electoral.gov.mt/Elections/General>

"It is clear that the voters have chosen to continue on the same path (...) those who thought that people were going to vote for pessimism do not know the citizens of Malta and Gozo, who have chosen optimism, energy, goodwill, unity and equality (...) Thank you for this vote of confidence whereby you have confirmed your choice of 2013. You have given me your trust in spite of this electoral campaign which was one of the most negative in the history of our country," declared Prime Minister Joseph Muscat when the results were announced. With this Labour has now won two consecutive general elections for the first time since the archipelago's independence in 1964.

"Our work is not finished. We have only travelled half of the way and you have decided that we should continue," added the head of government who promised to reduce taxes and to increase retirement pensions, renovate the road system and to legal same sex marriage (civil union between two people of the same sex has been allowed since April 2014 in Malta, the country in which Catholicism is a State religion).

Joseph Muscat campaigned on his government's economic results, which he is quick to qualify as an "economic miracle". The Prime Minister can indeed be proud of the state Valletta's public finances, since in 2016 the capital made its first budgetary surplus (+ 1%) since 1981. Moreover the GDP

growth rate is high (4.5% in 2013, 3.5% in 2014, 6.2% in 2015 and 4.1% last year) and unemployment is very low (4.1%, i.e. the 3rd lowest rate in the EU after that of the Czech Republic and Germany).

Aged 43 and from Pieta, Joseph Muscat is a graduate in public policy, European studies and literature. He started his career as a journalist on the radio and for the press. Elected an MEP in 2004 he left office four years later when he was elected as head of the Labour Party following the defeat of his party in the general elections on 8th March 2008. Joseph Muscat then became the opposition leader. He entered office as Prime Minister after the general election on 9th March 2013, therefore on 3rd June he became the first Labour head of government to win two consecutive general elections. Joseph Muscat will be officially re-appointed to office as head of government on 7th June next.

The Maltese courts will deliver their decisions on the complaints lodged against the Prime Minister and his peers within the next few months. In the meantime and until 30th June the archipelago holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union.

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