

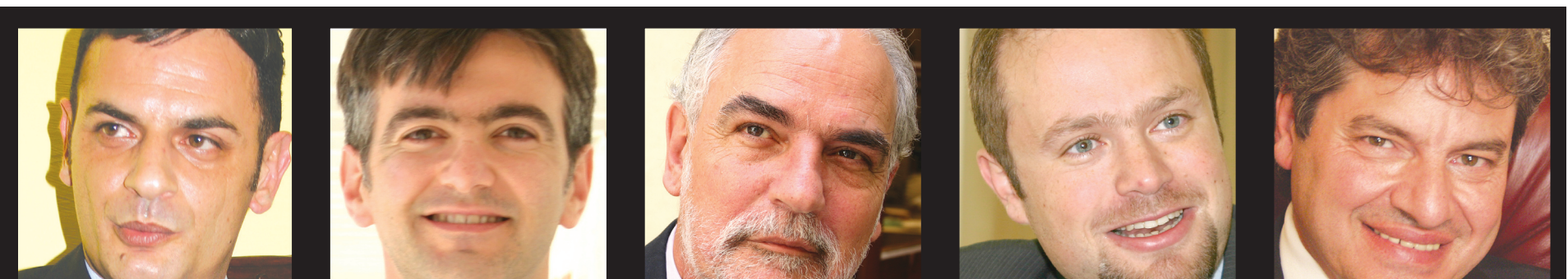


JAMES FENECH
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DISCLOSURE:

EU Ombudsman says European Parliament wrongly rejected MaltaToday's request for access to MEPs' payments.

WE LIFT THE LID ON MEP ACCOUNTS



In a historic first for a Maltese newspaper, the European Ombudsman yesterday recognised MaltaToday's right to access to data detailing the allowances received by Malta's MEPs, as Ombudsman Diamandouros says the EP's refusal to grant the newspaper access constituted maladministration. **PAGE 3 - EDITORIAL PAGE 11**

Ex-health promotion czar pulls out of World Heart Day address

KARL SCHEMBRI

THE former health promotion department director, Mario Spiteri, has pulled out of a World Heart Day symposium that is being organised today, after the health minister sent the new director as his delegate.

Spiteri was removed from his position last Thursday after five years serving as the public face of government's health aware-

ness campaigns, including the smoking ban and sexual health promotion.

As part of today's World Heart Day activities, Health Minister Louis Deguara was meant to give a speech this morning together with Spiteri at a symposium organised by Sanofi Aventis at the new Mater Dei hospital.

However, the minister decided to pull out of the event that would have placed him alongside the former director, sending Spi-

teri's own successor, Dr Charmaine Gauci, instead to speak about heart health.

In turn, Spiteri refused to speak alongside Dr Gauci, informing the organisers that he will not be delivering his presentation after he was unceremoniously demoted.

"I have no place there," Spiteri told MaltaToday Midweek yesterday night. "Now Dr Gauci is the director, so she should be speaking at the event. I never

found the bed made for me and now that I'm no longer heading the department it should be those heading it that should be speaking publicly."

Spiteri said last week he had "very strongly-based suspicions" that the invisible hand of the Church was behind his removal after he stood his ground against promoting abstinence exclusively as the only means of prevention from sexually transmitted diseases.

He told last Sunday's MaltaToday that he had "a serious clash with the church's commission for youth (Kummissjoni Djocesana Zghazagh – KDZ) when they asked for our department's funding to finance their campaign promoting sexual abstinence."

KDZ however denied having any say in Spiteri's removal, while the health minister said Gauci's appointment happened through the official selection channels following an interview.

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