

LITHUANIA NEW MEMBERSHIP

ECA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

2008

Text: Ian Sutton
Photos: ECA & EUROPEAN CASINOS-The Elite



The ECA General Assembly 2008 was held at Grand Casino Basel from Tranchant Group

Representatives of the European Casino industry gathered in Grand Casino Basel, belongs to Tranchant Group, in Switzerland on 29 May for the 2008 General Assembly of the European Casino Association (ECA).

Chairman Ron Goudsmit welcomed invited guests and representatives of the ECA from 21 countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland).

The ECA represents the interests of 950 Casinos and around 80,000 employees in 23 countries across Europe. In 2007, ECA member Casinos welcomed some 115 million guests and generated aggregate total annual revenues in excess of 10.2 billion Euro.

One of the first points on this year's agenda was the unanimous acceptance of Lithuania's application for membership, bringing the total number of ECA member countries to 23.

EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

The next session focused on current developments in Brussels. Although the EU has elected to leave regulation of the gaming industry under the jurisdiction of Members States, it remains a complex issue. There is uncertainty in some countries concerning regulation, a fact that has led to an increasing number of cases being referred to the European Court of Justice. The ECA expects this practice to continue and even grow in the future, thus reopening the regulatory debate. The ECA fully supports a clear regulatory policy and has set itself the



A moment of the meeting



ECA members attending the 2008 General Assembly

goal of ensuring that national, European and international decision-makers have access to the best information available. The ECA closely monitors developments and trends affecting the Casino industry on a national, European and global level. The issues are diverse, ranging for example from regulatory matters or referrals to the European Court of Justice through to smoking bans. It also tracks initiatives that might not initially seem related to the Casino industry, but could indeed have a direct or indirect impact, such as the EU's "TV without Frontiers" initiative.

A working group has been established to analyse the ECA's strategic focus, assess the gravity and urgency of current trends in the regulatory debate and determine the actions needed. Its goal is to anticipate changes and act accordingly. Also since some MEPs and decision-makers are clearly not sufficiently informed on the actual situation and business practices in the Casino industry, the ECA seeks to provide information to ECA members and EU decision-makers to support them in making sound, informed and calculated decisions.

"We work very hard to keep up with the pace of developments at an EU level across the entire gaming industry and make sure we try and provide the decision-makers with access to all the information they need", explained Ron Goudsmit, ECA Chairman.

FATF UPDATE

Next on the agenda was a discussion on the proposals of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF) regarding the Casino sector. The ECA has set up a dedicated FATF working group of national and international experts to maintain contact with the relevant authorities and associations and ensure they have access to authoritative information on how Casinos operate and the measures and procedures they already have in place. The working group seeks and identifies issues, drives discussion with the FATF and has already provided a large number of comments and recommendations on the proposed new risk based approach. The FATF report is expected later this year.



The European Court of Justice in Luxembourg



Vassilios Skouris, current President of the European Court of Justice



Berlaymont Building, Brussels, European Commission headquarters



ECA members in front of Grand Casino Basel