

By **Ron Goudsmit**, Chairman of ECA and Vice President, Holland Casino International, The Netherlands

JOINING FORCES TO CONTRIBUTE TO A EUROPEAN MARKETPLACE

The European Union (EU) since the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty more than ten years ago has been growing both in size and in competence. Since 1992, 13 countries have joined the EU and the realisation of the internal market has seen considerable progress. More policy areas than ever before are currently being discussed at an EU level, with many of those discussions leading to EU measures to either liberalise or harmonise national provisions with a view to create a more level playing field across Europe.

The gambling industry is one of many industry sectors which policy makers at the EU level have over the last few years started to pay increased attention to.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ECA

Observing this development, members of the European Casino Association (ECA) in 2005 took the timely decision to step up their involvement in policy discussions with a view to address and promote issues related to Casinos and/or Casino operations and in doing so to provide a focal point on Casino matters for Casino operators as well as for EU and national policy makers and stakeholders.

The ECA, evolving from the European Casino Forum, was officially established in early 2005 as a European non-profit organisation in Brussels aiming to:

- .- Collect and provide information on Casino operations and Casino administration including assessment of European and national legislation and regulations addressing Casino operations
- .- Increase awareness and understanding of the Casino industry amongst EU policy makers and stakeholders
- .- Constructively contribute to EU decision making on matters affecting the Casino sector

The ECA represents the interests of over 800 Casinos and approximately 62,000 employees across Europe.



Aiming to take a more active role as a contributor to policy discussions, the ECA through its members quickly established the necessary structure and data to be able to participate at an EU level.

THE BOARD

The current Board consists of seven representatives including as Chairman Ron Goudsmit (Vice President, Holland Casino International, The Netherlands), as Vice-Chairman Anders Galfvensjö (CEO, Casino Cosmopol AB, Sweden), as Treasurer Matthias Hein (Member of the Board, Deutsche Spielbanken Interessen- und Arbeitsgemeinschaft - DeSIA, Germany), Paul Herzfeld (CEO, Casinos Austria, Austria), Jean-François Cot



(Secretary General, Casinos de France, France), Heliodoro Giner (Secretary General, Spanish Casino Association, Spain) and Ken Watling (Director of Policy, British Casino Association, UK).

SETTING UP THE ECA

The ECA was set up with as one of its main objectives to be able to represent the Casino industry towards policy makers, stakeholders and the general public. To this end, members of the ECA undertook a fact finding exercise early on in 2005 drawing up comparable data on the sectors' size and shape in all European countries represented in the ECA in 2004.

This data is currently being updated and the 2005 figures will soon be available on the ECA's website, which had also been set up last year (www.europecasinoassociation.org).

CONTRIBUTIONS TO POLICY DISCUSSIONS

Given the development of policy discussions in Brussels, the proposed Services Directive and the review of the Television without Frontiers Directive (TVWF) just being two of various developments affecting the Casino sector, the ECA in 2005 was delighted to see its increased communication and outreach activities bear fruit receiving invitations to participate in and speak at events in the European Parliament addressing the sector.

The ECA drafted position papers on the two aforementioned dossiers, the Services and the TVWF Directive. It also established direct communication with the Swiss Institute of Comparative Law, which is

currently carrying out a study on behalf of the European Commission on Gambling Services in the EU Internal Market.

RESPONSIBLE GAMING

Further to the above, the ECA in 2005 took the initiative to address the issue of responsible gambling. At the AGM in London in January 2006, the results of an internal working group on responsible gaming drawing upon the expertise and the experience from the members of the ECA were presented. Results of the working group were incorporated into the ECA's Code of Conduct for Responsible Gaming, which was adopted in London highlighting the interest in and true commitment of the ECA and its members to the subject matter.

ECA MOVING FORWARD

In summary, the ECA, through the hard work of its members, has had a successful first year being able to secure progress both in internal and external matters through for instance the adoption of the Code on Responsible Gambling and the contributions to discussions on the Services Directive. While appreciating these successes, both the Casino market and the policy environment we are operating in within Europe are evolving fast. The ECA and its members will therefore maintain its high work rate and further build its role as focal point on Casino matters for Casino operators as well as for EU and national policy makers and stakeholders.

