

ECA

TO CONTINUE CONTRIBUTING TO EU DISCUSSIONS ON THE FUTURE OF GAMBLING IN EUROPE



ECA Board members: Matthias Hein, Paul Herzfeld, Ron Goudsmit, Guido Berghmans and Jean-François Cot

At the Annual General Meeting of the European Casino Association (ECA), held in London, members confirmed the ECA's intent to continue reaching out to EU policy makers and stakeholders in 2007 with a view to contributing constructively to ongoing discussions on the future of gambling in Europe.

2006 was a very important year for the ECA both in terms of market evolution and in terms of political interest in gambling.

Discussions on the Services Directive, first proposed by then Internal Market Commissioner Frits Bolkestein in January 2004, concluded in late 2006, confirming the exclusion of gambling from the internal services market.



At the same time, members of the European Parliament and the European Commission have shown increased interest in national gambling markets and national regulations for these markets.

A study was concluded in 2006 addressing these national regulations. Regrettably, contrary to the ambitious and commendable objectives set by the researchers from the Swiss Institute of Comparative Law, the study could not secure the complete overview that stakeholders such as the ECA had hoped for. Though acknowledged as an important step in understanding the European gambling landscape, the study contains several significant shortcomings still to be addressed.

ECA members in 2006 included Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. ECA membership continues to increase, with Romania set to join in the course of 2007.

In line with the evolution of the gambling market, the ECA continued to grow in 2006, today representing the interests of almost 900 Casinos and 76,000 employees across Europe, all fully committed to helping to create and continuously improve the quality of the services offered to guests in the live Casino and entertainment environment.



Ron Goudsmit, Chairman ECA



Istvan Vadja, Casino Sophron, Hungary; Claes Tellman, Casino Cosmopol, Sweden and Dorni De Wilde, Casino Middelkerke, Belgium



Heliodoro Giner, Spanish Casino Association, and Ken Watling, British Casino Association



Olympic Casino executives, Estonia, Anders Galsvenjo and Andri Avila



ACTIVITIES

ECA members carried out a range of activities in 2006, all directly linked to Casino games and gambling activities in Casinos.

The current board consists of seven representatives: Chairman Ron Goudsmit (Holland Casino, The Netherlands), Vice-Chairman Guido Berghmans (Casino 2000, Luxembourg), Treasurer Matthias Hein (Deutsche Spielbanken Interessen- und Arbeitsgemeinschaft - DeSIA) and Paul Herzfeld (Casinos Austria), Jean-François Cot (Casinos de France), Heliodoro Giner (Spanish Casino Association) and Ken Watling (British Casino Association).



Casinos Austria executives: Hermann Pamminer and Brett Samuelson



Joel Santos, Portugal, and Antonis Stergiotis, Casino Loutraki, Greece



Heikki Rinta-Panttila, Gran Casino Helsinki, Finland, and Esko Romppainen, Ray Casinos, Finland

In the light of accelerating policy discussions on gambling in Brussels, including increased interest from MEPs in the matter and investigations initiated by the Commission concerning the compliance of national gambling legislations with internal market rules, in 2006 the ECA increased its commitment and activities in relation to providing policy makers with a true picture of the gambling market and its particular needs and threats.

RESPONSIBLE GAMING

One of the ECA's top priorities is to create and continuously improve the quality of the Casino industry, particularly towards

their customers. To this end in 2006 the ECA continued its efforts to address the issue of responsible gambling. Following the adoption of the ECA Code of Conduct for Responsible Gaming in early 2006, the AMG confirmed that a specialist working group will continue to study this important issue.

ECA MOVING FORWARD

In 2006 the ECA continued to establish and profile itself as the key contact in relation to Casino games and casino-based gambling in Europe.

To this end ECA members stepped up their efforts to contribute constructively to policy discussions both at national and at EU level. Eager to continue this approach, in 2007 the ECA will again be committed to addressing questions arising in relation to gambling and to reaching out to stakeholders and policy makers with a view to making its expertise and experience available to shape policy framework in an evolving market.

MARKET EVOLUTION

As in the previous year, in 2006 the European Casino market saw a moderate growth of 3%, varying between Member States. The Casino sector has a 15% share of the total gambling market in Europe.



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