

Gambling machines banned from next July

The Government wants to ban all one-armed bandits and slot machines from the Norwegian market from July 1st next year, the Minister of Culture, Trond Giske, has announced.

All licenses for gambling machines expire on that date, and none will be renewed, Giske says to the newspaper VG.

This means that 15,000 machines will be removed by July 1st 2007 at the latest.

The government's move comes after a prolonged public debate recognizing the serious problems the gambling machines pose for an increasing number of people becoming compulsive gamblers.

Today these machines are often located in public places, like shopping malls and bars.

The government has wanted to give the football pools organization Norsk Tipping monopoly on gambling machines, allowing a limited number under very strict regulations.

However, this case is pending before the EEA court, and even if this monopoly should be accepted by the court, it will not come into effect before 2008, according to Giske.

This means that Norway will be without gambling machines for at least 6 months. Should the EEA court refuse to accept the Norsk Tipping monopoly, the ban on gambling machines in Norway would be permanent, Giske says to VG.