

According to a new report

Italy considered one of the most promising online and land-based gambling markets

(Italy).- After the decision of the European Court of Justice in the Placanica case and the recent tender that allowed a large number of online and land-based gambling operators to enter the Italian market, all eyes are now turning to Italy.

Italy is being considered in its role in the liberalisation of European gambling markets.

The consulting firm MECN's new study and survey „The Italian Gambling Market – a Forerunner in the Liberalisation of European Gambling Markets“ analyses the Italian gambling market in detail. The study includes the results of a survey MECN conducted among more than 70 international operators who offered their unique insights and assessments.

The Italian market has a top priority for international gambling operators. After the recent legal conflicts in traditional gambling markets, an obvious key strategic option for many operators is expansion into less restrictive jurisdictions or into regions where increased liberalisation will likely take place in the near future.

Accordingly, more than 80% of the international gambling operators (also including several state operators) surveyed believe that the Italian market will be of major relevance for their future business.

The growth drivers are, above all, the retail betting sector and Internet gambling.

In expectation of the decision in the Placanica case and in view of its empty state coffers, Italy decided to drastically increase the number of online and retail betting licenses.

Accordingly, at the beginning of 2007 nearly 14.000 new betting licenses (for sports and horse race betting shops/terminals) were awarded.

Among the new operators are the giants of global gambling: Ladbrokes, Intralot, William Hill, Betfair, Gala/Eurobet. In addition, more than 30 new online /interactive gambling operators obtained a license and will push the market forward to new heights.

The study identifies several reasons why Italy is perceived as so attractive: It says that another phase of liberalisation is expected in the near future and that two-thirds of the experts surveyed expect another phase of liberalisation in the near future that will go even further than the steps planned for 2007.

Besides, it takes into account a growing relevance of foreign operators, because a large majority of the experts believe that by 2010 international operators, such as Ladbrokes and Intralot, will capture a relevant share of the gambling market. Finally, there is growth potential, especially for retail betting and interactive gambling, because, overall, Italian gambling market is expected to grow to Euro 61 billion (turnover) by 2010 (64%).

By 2010, the retail betting market is expected to grow to 14 billion euros, which is about 200% of its current size (CAGR of 32%). Another growth driver will be interactive gambling, which is expected to reach ca. Euro 3.7 billion by 2010, a growth of ca. 240% over the current level (CAGR of 40%).