

# **Finnish government says online bingo not a done deal**

**Ministers had originally been given a deadline last Friday**

Finland's government has said that no decision has yet been taken on whether Veikkaus should be granted a license to operate a national online bingo site. This despite news that Boss Media has already been awarded the contract to provide software and services to the site.

Government sources told Gaming Intelligence Group that the Ministry of Internal Affairs has distributed Veikkaus' application to relevant departments in Finland, seeking opinion on whether the application should be granted.

Ministers had originally been given a deadline last Friday by which to respond to the application, however this has now been extended until the end of next week. The Ministry of Internal Affairs will then consider all the responses before making a recommendation on granting the license.

This is not the first time that a state-owned gaming operator has announced a major agreement prior to receiving the relevant authorization. Last year, Svenska Spel was forced to withdraw from a joint venture with Lithuania's Winloto after it failed to receive approval for its international expansion, at a cost of several million Swedish Krona. Earlier this year, Holland Casino was blocked in its move online by the Dutch government, having already begun development of its online poker and casino platform with CryptoLogic.

Given the nature of online bingo however, it is not anticipated that the Finnish government will withhold authorization.

Responding to questions regarding earlier comments by the

Minister of Culture regarding the possibility of a state-controlled online poker network, Mr. Kari Paaso from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health said that bingo was the only form of online gaming currently under consideration.

The choice of Boss Media as software provider however means that should online bingo prove successful, and if authorization is received, the roll-out of additional games should be a simple process. Boss Media already supplies the platform for the only two state-owned poker networks in the world, Svenska Spel and Austria's win2day.

No decision on the further expansion of online gaming in Finland is expected before publication of a report later this year by an Internal Affairs committee, investigating ways to tighten gambling regulations within the framework of Finnish and European Law. An amendment to Finland's Lottery Law is expected in the first half of 2009.