

Uruguay Government would open 13 new gambling venues before the end of its mandate

The government aims to increase games of chance in the country by the latest term of its mandate. It plans to open 13 gambling venues, mainly slots, which would be added to the existing 34, and to local casinos of Carrasco and Parque Hotel.

Most of the new casino will be operated through a mixed operating system between the Casino General Direction of the country and private businessmen which present projects of tourist and commercial interest.

The director of the casinos of the country, Fernando Nopitsch, informed that the entity will make a unique call for all the people interested in tourist or commercial activities that have, as compensation, the possibility of a mixed casino.

Through this system, the casino is operated by the estate and the private party brings the infrastructure and the services that are necessary for the operation, so it charges a percentage of the profits that is between 35 and 45%, depending on each project.

The 13 projects would include slot halls in the two only regional capital cities that do not have venues from the Casino General Direction of the state: Florida and Trinidad. In both cases they will be connected to tourist developments: in the first one, a convention center and, the second one, a hotel in Parque Andresito.

However, the list of projects that include the new venues is long. A slots hall is planned in Gran Hotel Salto, and another one is being planned in the five-star hotel Arapey Resort.

In the city of Paysandú, there are at least three groups interested in the development of a hotel with a slots hall, or in building a new hotel on the shore of Uruguay River that also is connected to a gambling venue. In Colonia, a private group is interested in installing a hotel for conventions, that also includes a slot hall.

In Canelones, there is the possibility to build a slot hall in the recently inaugurated Civic Center in Lagomar (Ciudad de la Costa). It would also add a mixed development with tourist activities in Atlántida.

An investment group proposes to develop and expand the Argentino Hotel in Piriápolis and improve the existing casino. There are also interested groups in installing a slots hall in Maldonado, a place which is considered very profitable.

In Rocha, businessmen showed their interest in building a four or five-star hotel in La Paloma, with a slots hall. Besides, in Cerro Largo, the aim is to open a four-star hotel with a slot hall in the city of Río Branco, which is also considered very profitable.

In Tacuarembó, it is possible to expand the Hotel Carlos Gardel through a mixed development that includes a slots hall. On top of that, the casino of Radisson Victoria Plaza –the first of this mixed system- will add a third floor for gambling activities, which would expand the current casino in 900 meters.

The historical Nogaró casino will also be changed to a mixed system. The Casino Direction presented a project together with the owners of Mantra Hotel, that is being considered by the National Audit Office, but Conrad Hotel and Cipriani Group want a tender process to be performed, in which they would present their own projects. A new casino hotel in Riviera has to be added, through a mixed system, too.

The Casino Direction considers it is very important to

strengthen the limit zone with Brazil. It is considered crucial that Brazilian citizens visit free shops or Uruguayan seaside resorts with gambling venues.

From 2004 to 2008, the casinos of the state showed a growth, except in 2006, in which they decreased slightly. In 2008, they collected USD 151,630,872, more than the USD 128,107,798 in 2007.

Slots had the 91.34% of the winnings generated by the casinos of the state in 2008; the remaining 8.66% was registered by other traditional games (such as the roulette).

In 2007 casinos brought USD 30,909,923 to general taxes; USD 5,028,315 to the Minister of Tourism; USD 4,406,013 to INDA, USD 1,135,808 to Sodre and USD 267,826 to the Commission of Historical Patrimony.