

European Gambling Briefing 2009

As predicted, proceedings at the recent European Gambling Briefing, which took place on 22nd-23rd April, were peppered with references and argument about the Schaldemose report and the Draft Bill going through France, with all angles being well defended by speakers representing all gaming interests in Europe.



The arguments were summed up during a hotly contested final panel where Philippe Vlaemminck was tasked with defending the report against Mario Gallea of Random Consulting and Manuel Esparrago of Policy Action Group. Jonathon Strock provided the operator's point of view from Barriere Interactive Gaming.

Despite a valiant effort, Philippe Vlaemminck was unable to persuade the majority of the audience that the arguments in the report favouring state monopoly were justified or defensible, a debate likely to continue.



Regardless of the global recession, the industry once again turned out in force. Several people were surprised but very pleased to see that the industry is continuing to weather the downturn so well, and remain committed to important industry meetings, education and networking.

Tom Lippiett, Associate of Berwin Leighton Paisner commented „EGB provided a high quality and comprehensive round-up of the latest issues in the European gambling sector, both at an EU and national level. The quality of speakers at EGB was, as ever, extremely high and ensured that the conference provided comprehensive coverage of the legal environment for gambling“.

EGB was once again blessed with impeccable timing – not only for the glorious weather it enjoyed – but once again an announcement on changes to policy filtered through to delegates as it was happening. This time it was the news that Denmark was to reassess its stance on iGaming; allowing speakers and delegates the chance to discuss the issue straight away.

Mark Derveux, Vice President of Corporate Affairs of Bingo.com Ltd, commented „This is the one legal conference focussed on European law that I attend. The combination of legal professionals, regulators and operators provide an excellent forum for debate of current and future issues. This year’s conference lived up to its usual high standards“. Several conclusions – though fiercely debated – emerged from the meeting, including:



- Just about every expert in the room agreed that ISP blocking is a futile effort given modern technologies, so either regulation is needed or another method of enforcement developed;
- The tentative steps towards liberalisation in some countries are welcomed, but cautiously, with online industry interests reasserting the need for a fair tax regime and level playing-field to stop players continuing to use non-regulated sites;
- The EU Parliament will continue to support the interests of their respective monopolies and continue to employ arguments deemed unfair or unfounded according to the iGaming industry;
- An EU directive or decisive actions from the ECJ still remain a distant hope, with real progress likely to come from individual states who want to raise tax and regulate their market for consumers;
- Countries to watch for potentially lucrative and quick

growth are France, South Africa and potentially Denmark as regulatory changes take hold in the near future;



Mark Walker, Global Head of Conferences, Clarion Gaming, summed up the conference as “Another brilliant chance seized on by the industry to network and learn about impending changes to regulation or the technical aspects of its enforcement. Of course, it is the chance for many to air grievances about the lack of progress at a European level, and there was no shortage of pointed arguments. Altogether we were very happy with the turn-out, quality of debate and think everyone enjoyed the networking.”

More informations: www.europeangamblingbriefing.com/2009