

Interview with Dr. Leo Wallner – General Director of the Casinos Austria AG

[key:IC] speaks to the general manager of the Casinos Austria AG, Mr Dr. Leo Wallner from Amstetten, Lower Austria. Dr. Leo Wallner was born on the 4th November, 1935 in Amstetten, Lower Austria. He is married and father with three children.

[key:IC], Editor of Chief, Reinhold Schmitt: Since when are you in the gaming industry?

Dr. Leo Wallner: I am a general manager of the Casinos Austria AG since February, 1968. Earlier before, I had already constructed the organisation of the new concession society. Because the casinos had at that time still not a good reputation, I had to separate from the chancellor of that time, Dr. Josef Klaus to whose economic advisers I belonged by this time.

[key:IC]: Which function are you carrying out today?

Wallner: Still, and with it for over 35 years, I am a general manager of the Casinos Austria AG.

[key:IC]: Which games are offered in your houses?

Wallner: In twelve Austrian casinos twelve different games are offered in 240 card tables. There are 1.800 gambling machines. The offer in the 68 Casinos, which Casinos Austria operates world-wide, varies. There are very often play variants, which are offered a strong local purchase to have and only in a Casino (e.g. Caravels Pontoon in India).

[key:IC]: In your opinion is a saturation of the market reached with Casinos in Europe?

Wallner: The saturation of the market is different from country to country. Switzerland, with the highest Casino density in Europe, has surely a satisfied Casino market, if not even surfeited.

[key:IC]: Slot-machine plays attain alone by their technical innovation ever larger popularity. Is the classical play not any more attractive?

Wallner: The trend goes completely clearly to the device play. Here one has high chances of winning at small stake amounts and short gaming duration. The classical play is, if you want so, a landmark of the Casinos. We will also continue to promote this. Thus also play tables stand in some of our Jackpot Casinos, which are very well accepted. But certainly we will be considering about how to arrange the classical play still more attractive. Tournaments are an attractive Special. However participate ever less interested.



[key:IC]: Many deplore the super-elevated starting funds in Europe. Do you see the need to action here?

Wallner: This analysis concerns the large, international Poker tournaments in first line. We have such a tournament with the Poker EM in the Casino Baden. Here it is considered to extend the high standard further, to set strengthened on quality and also the tourism environment of the venue as additional advantage to refer. Still are very well visited our on certain target groups tailored tournaments, like e.g. first visits, co-ordinated tournaments. There are approximately 100 of it per year and the number in Austria is going to continue to rise.

[key:IC]: The economic downhill driving could not be brought so far to an end. To what extent also are your gaming houses concerned?

Wallner: The private consumption always reacts with restraint to thunderclouds in the economy-heavens. Above all those goods, which are not to be assigned to the everyday need, are less strongly inquired. Also a Casino visit counts to it and we take notice at an easy decrease in guest numbers.

[key:IC]: The play automats follow trends. Is the constant adaptation to newest generations meaningful or is the centre of attention more the play habit for you?

Wallner: Naturally we adapt our offer also to the respective trends. We try however to take on the needs and play habits of our guests consideration. We will not remove an automat, which however no longer generally trend is gladly played lies. Better mix is reliably the best offer.

[key:IC]: Which competition do you see with the on-line gaming houses and which danger do you feel with this form of the Game of fortune?

Wallner: In Austria Casinos Austria has the national concession together with the Austrian Lottery as unique enterprise for the execution of on-line plays. Our special attention with the enterprise of our on-line plays with win2day.at is with the correct, safe and transparent expiration of play and correct disbursement in the case of profit. I am convinced that this is not always a matter of course. Beyond that the participation in foreign gambling from the inland is legally forbidden. The offer of www.win2day.at and/or the participation in it is however to 100 per cent in conformity with the Austrian gambling law.

[key:IC]: What occurs to you spontaneously, if you think of amusing occurrences during your occupation?

Wallner: The preparations for the opening of the first Casinos lingering back more behind the iron curtain in Hungary were extremely difficult. A capitalistic Casino in a socialist state has been at that time almost inconceivable. In the

context of many delegations I have been within a frame-work of many delegations together with the Minister of Trade at that time, Josef Staribacher, often in Hungary. It resulted in such a way that our strategic discussions we were holding at, like being of the talk of the church by sightseeing and walk behind the altar. There we felt undisturbed. The Casino Budapest was opened then to 1980.

[key:IC]: The tasks within the gaming houses are various and time-consuming. They engage themselves in addition also still very intensively in the sporty range. As a president of the OOC you take your tasks very seriously. How can the two, nevertheless so different ranges, „Casinos“ and „Olympics“ being reconciled by conflicting opinions?

Wallner: The connecting element is the match. Besides, Casinos Austria is extremely active also in the Sports sponsoring. Content wise synergies thus very probably exist. It is natural temporally a challenge, which I up to now believe however to master very well.

[key:IC]: How does your leisure time reconciliation look?

Wallner: Bearing up to corporal keeping-fit at fresh air e.g. with tennis, water ski, cross-country skiing. It does not have to be necessarily at the maximum performances. A walk in the forest brings me also good recovery.

[key:IC]: If you had three wishes of yours, what gives you the sudden idea, apart from wealth, spontaneously?

Wallner: I would like to remain healthy, to have further a lucky life and be meaningfully active. To have wealth to me means a “Nice-to-Have” circumstance, more not.

[key:IC]: With the term „Casinos“ and „Gambling Halls“ connect the consumers not only the ambient but also the luck of the large profit. Of which large payments, which experienced your guests, do you remind yourself?

Wallner: It gave a large Jackpot profit in the Casino Graz, 1.5 million EUR. The joy of the guests does not rise however with the height of the profit sum. It is also beautiful for me to see, how much guests are pleased about by far smaller amounts.

[key:IC]: What distinguishes the Casino(s) for which you work particularly?

Wallner: Beautiful ambient, large extend of seriousness, experience of many years, best co-workers, an international success, in order to enumerate only some references.

[key:IC]: Do you see possibilities of increasing the attractiveness from gambling places to also by changes on the participation of to the legislator.

Wallner: Naturally we work constantly to arrange our Casinos still more attractive. But there are not any changes in law necessary. There were large changes recently in the Casinos Bregenz, Linz and Vienna. In addition, the play offer is constantly renewed and extended. With the interactive wheel of fortune a straight world premiere succeeded to us.

[key:IC]: The Internet takes in the meantime an important area in the information flow for consumers. How here do your activities look like?

Wallner: The homepage von Casinos Austria www.casinos.at presents the enterprise and its twelve Casinos and offers pertinent service: Minute-current Jackpot status, interactive player clarifying, route planner, direct reservation in the partner hotels of Casinos Austria and a comprehensive Online-shop are to make the homepage attendance an informative pleasure. Communication over the Internet is strengthened by news type character, feedback possibility and its own press range. Answers to the questions usually posed, explanations of the most important Casino notions and an Event scheduler complete the offer. Live broadcast of events like e.g. fashion

shows or Poker tournaments supply Casino atmosphere home.

[key:IC]: What is your point of view towards the Online Casino?

Wallner: Our on-line Casino is very successful. Here can one take part in the gamble not only over the computer, but also over WAP-mobile phone. The play platform is in the future over further channels, e.g. interactive television, to be attainable. At present there are approximately 6,000 competitors/subscribers per week. There are the gambles arranged by the lottery contributing to the turn-over at 94 percent, the other of the Casino games at six percent. Recently win2day was supplemented around the French Roulette. It is after American Roulette, Black Jack, Draw Poker, Chicken Slot and Lucky of Monster – the sixth play in the on-line Casino. In the second yearly half 2003 a seventh Casino game is to follow. Within the Non-Casino-compartment of win2day.at, Gaming-room, there are at present ten gambles.

[key:IC]: Thank you very much for this conversation.