

Events

MONTE-CARLO
EUROMAT Summit 2018

Benjamin Duplan,
SAFF Amusement

Benjamin Duplan grew up in the South of France surrounded by a family business operating amusement machines, video games and pool tables, which was established by his grandfather in 1948. Mr. Duplan's was educated in France before traveling to the University of Kingston Upon Thames to complete his degree. Having worked for the MARS Group in research and development, Mr. Duplan returned home to take over the running of the family business, SAFF Amusement. SAFF Amusement has both a significant operation in the South of France and acts as a distributor for a series of machine manufacturers from Poland, Wales and the US, which SAFF has been doing successfully for five-six years.

EUROMAT Summit 2018
Monte-Carlo Bay Hotel & Resort
June 4-6, 2018

The European Gaming and Amusement Federation (EUROMAT) has confirmed that its annual summit will take place June 4-6, in Monaco at the Monte Carlo Bay Hotel & Resort. As the body representing the views of the low-stakes gaming and amusements industries to European institutions, EUROMAT has designed the new-format summit to enable operators, regulators and manufacturers to exchange information in a relaxed and informal setting.

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The long road to redemption: French gaming connection



During the EUROMAT Summit in Monte-Carlo, expert speakers will explore the growing markets for redemption products both in Europe and globally, highlighting the case in France in which trade association, AFOR, is using EUROMAT's expertise to lobby for legislative change in the country. AFOR's Benjamin Duplan explains the current situation in France for redemption

The situation in France is that the amusement market is very small, while at the same time we operate within one of the most restrictive markets in the world in terms of gaming and gambling. Currently there are around 100-150 operators of various sizes with perhaps 400-500 people working in the entire industry in France. Before the formation of AFOR, we didn't have a trade body to represent this industry, and so it was fundamental for our voice to be heard that we establish a trade association. In the past there have been attempts by various parties to regulate street gaming machines, AWP's, at the regulatory level, but all have proved unsuccessful. I don't think AWP's are the answer and firmly believe that championing legislation change to allow such machines is the wrong way to tackle the issue.

The members of AFOR believe that redemption is a much more viable solution, though at present it's a product that's not widely understood in France. To this end we are seeking to educate French operators about the concept of redemption and to do so have engaged with EUROMAT to give advice and guidance to our newly established association. We held our first meeting on August 31, 2018 and two months later created the association.

We need to present our case to the government and do so with a unified voice. At present the association consists of around 30+ operators, which represents about 30 per cent of the overall operator base in France. The first priority for AFOR is to educate our membership as to the benefits of redemption gaming, explaining that this is a type of amusement product allowed in countries with some of the strictest regimes in the world, including the Middle East.

My view is that redemption is a harmless pastime, and at present I can't see a reason why our bid to establish redemption in France would be rejected. EUROMAT President, Jason Frost, is very enthusiastic in regards to our redemption plans and has provided indispensable help in the establishment of AFOR. It is very complicated in France to establish an association, but EUROMAT gave us both credibility and support, which enables us to lobby the government directly in order to stimulate change.

While current legislation is limited to five free credits for gaming machine play, there is an exception for fun-fairs, whereby travelling amusement shows can give away prizes, but strictly it's still not a form of redemption. The focus of AFOR is upon promoting pure redemption as a fun, family entertainment product that from the outset will promote skill-games, such as basketball redemption products, as opposed to any gambling-related products.

In France, we operate under restrictive gaming legislation dating back to 1983. At the moment we are limited to offering a maximum of five free credits to the player, which prohibits us from offering redemption products to our customers. Our aim, working with EUROMAT, is to lobby the government for an amendment to existing legislation that would allow more than five credits, which in today's money would not even buy you a lollipop. However, we are in the very early stages of promoting redemption and have just begun the preliminary discussions to address our position with the government.

Our view is that a change to a maximum stake of €1 and prize of €10 would be a huge achievement. We want to create case studies to demonstrate the successful operation of redemption machines in both the US and UK to provide a framework for the adoption of redemption in France, taking inspiration from these external markets with the help of EUROMAT. At the present time, French President Emmanuel Macron has set in motion a range of new laws aimed at freeing the country's economy through constitutional reforms. We believe this is the right time to present a strong case for the law to be amended to allow redemption play in France, and we are expecting answers before the end of the year.

However, if the initial attempt fails, there is a second bill in which we can also propose our amendments. Changing a law in France is very complicated, but if we can squeeze an amendment into an existing law to alter a few articles, it would allow us to do something very beneficial within a relatively short space of time. My hope is that we will be able to bring about real change, both as AFOR and in partnership with EUROMAT, within a two-three year period.