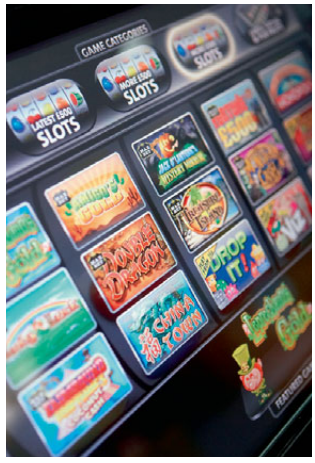
UK: health warning for gambling products?

A HEALTH warning, similar to those carried on cigarette packets, may soon be imposed on gambling products in the UK.



The Gambling Commission said that it will expect operators to ensure that the health warnings on the risks involved in playing are prominently visible on their games, notably fixed-odds betting terminals. The demand will also apply to sports betting.

The commission plans to work with other organisations to treat gambling as a potential disease and players must be given upfront messages about the danger.

If operators fail to "mitigate the harm from gambling," then they may face heavy fines, said the commission. It serves to remind operators of the incident in 2017 when 888 Holdings was fined £7.8m for not helping vulnerable players.

The commission is also looking for a levy from all operators to support treatment for addiction. According to statistics, only two per cent of the alleged 340,000 problem gamblers in the UK are receiving treatment at present.

Tim Miller, executive director of the Gambling Commission, said: "We expect consumers to get more information about potential risks. We have a moment here to bring gambling harms out of the shadows."

Triotech turns 20

CANADIAN creator of award-winning media-based attractions, Triotech, is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

The company was founded in 1999 by current president and CEO Ernest Yale with a handful of key collaborators. It has evolved to become a recognised global leader in media-based attractions.

"We'd like to thank all our customers and partners who trusted us and participated in our success. We love to say that we're not 20 years old… but 20 years young! We still have a lot of passion, energy and ideas. We see a bright future for the attractions industry as a whole and we are glad to be part of it," commented Yale.

The company, has deployed more than 350 attractions in over 60 countries across all continents and over 110 million guests have lived a Triotech experience over the last decade.

COLUMN

Easing the pressure

Governments should end their gambling 'addiction,' writes Euromat president ***Jason Frost***

TAXING the gambling industry appears time and again in the news.

Whether it is recent changes affecting the AWP sector in Italy, the Czech government increasing gambling taxes across the board, the UK government increasing the remote gambling duty, or Ireland doubling the rate of betting duty, it seems that governments view the gambling industry as a cash cow they can use to deliver on their promises.

The numbers and pace of change are staggering: the Czech government has proposed an increase from the 23 per cent tax rate currently applicable to all types of gambling to 25 per cent for betting, totalisator, raffles and small card tournaments, as well as to 30 per cent for lotteries, bingo and live games.

In Italy, the tax rate on VLTs will be increased from 1.35 per cent to two per cent, just as the sector adjusted all machines to the former tax rate. It is yet still possible that additional tax rates can be imposed shortly, increasing uncertainty for the industry.

The UK government brought forward an increase to the remote gambling from 15 per cent to 21 per cent as of April 1, while Ireland doubled the betting duty payable by online and retail bookmakers from one per cent to two per cent in the beginning of 2019.

Of course, the gambling industry is happy to pay its fair share, as any other business. However, the impression that this is a sector that can be freely used as a contributor in the funding of policy priorities via successive tax increases is a dangerous one. For starters, constant increases lead to instability in the tax regime, which is damaging to land-based operators who need to constantly recalibrate their machines to reflect the changes. This does not allow for each new system to settle in and for the initial investment cost to be covered, before tweaks need to be made again.

But the issue is a much wider one: as with any business, the gambling sector needs some degree of certainty in its tax regime, so that businesses can plan decisions accordingly. Quick successive changes are detrimental to that. In addition, the legal gambling sector is not without competitors, even in cases where it is a state monopoly. Making the legal gambling offer uncompetitive will end up pushing consumers to illegal channels. This creates the double problem of non-existent player protection and revenue losses for government coffers. If consumers go, so will tax revenue.

Governments should understand that, although on the surface gambling might look like an attractive source of public revenue, it is in essence a business relying on a competitive offer. They would do well to end their gambling "addiction" and consider the repercussions of using a sector as an inexhaustible revenue stream.