

Thursday, 15th May 2008 - 16:50CET

## Commissioner commits to open market for online gaming

The European



Commissioner for Internal Market and Services, Charlie McCreevy, assured Malta today that he is determined to enforce EU law to ensure open borders for the online gaming industry.

Online gaming is a growing industry in Malta, currently employing some 1,500 people, but several companies based here have complained of restrictions on potential players placed by a number of European countries.

The European Court of Justice had described online gaming as a service which falls within the principles of the freedom of establishment and the freedom of movement of services.

Mr McCreevy, who was in Malta for a few hours today, said some countries were making changes by lifting restrictions, and he was determined that others would do so to.

Finance Minister Tonio Fenech, who had talks with the Commissioner, said the principle of the open market applied also to online gaming.

"Some member states are raising moral issues, but this is clearly a protectionist approach to allow monopolies and limit competition," Mr Fenech said. He said Malta is insisting that the Commission proceed with infringement proceedings against the countries involved.

During his short visit Mr McCreevy toured the offices of the Malta Gaming Authority and praised its officials for their professionalism.

He also had words of praise for the professionalism of the Malta Financial Services Authority.

He said that among subjects discussed during his talks in Malta was the international financial turmoil affecting institutions all over the world, and how regulators could collaborate to address the issues together.

**Picture: Putting all their cards on the table: EU Commissioner Charlie McCreevy (left) meets officials of the Malta Gaming Authority.**

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### Comments

**B Ferrante (1 day, 8 hours ago)**

@ D Falzon. I think you are wrong. AFAIK, Online gambling companies may allow Maltese to play, but they will not be given the same tax incentives on the money earned in Malta, ie earned from Maltese players.

**Franco Farrugia (1 day, 20 hours ago)**

I think that this gaming industry is obscene, and shows every government for what it is - it is sheer hypocrisy. So, our Government launches SEDQA from public funds, yet, at the same time, allows for this gaming to take place in our country. Does the government, or any other government in our European countries, realise how much social evil there is

in this kind of industry?

Gaming shops are mushrooming all over the island, even near schools, places where the young congregate, and churches. They are open almost 24/7 and guarantee complete confidentiality.

BUT DO WE REALISE THAT WE ARE ENCOURAGING GAMING TO TAKE PLACE????? WE ARE GIVING COMPLETE LEGALITY TO THIS PRACTICE WHICH CERTAINLY WREAKS HAVOC IN CERTAIN FAMILY UNITS!

Once again, this shows how hypocritical our society has become, from the top!

**D.Falzon (1 day, 20 hours ago)**

I assume the minister is also referring to Maltese punters? I don't know if the law is still like that, but I had heard that one of the conditions the Maltese government imposes on the gaming companies opening in Malta is to not allow (by not allowing access) Maltese to play online gaming on their websites. I assume what is good for the goose is good for gander.

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