

## Over 8,000 people working in the gaming industry in Malta

Malta must remain responsive and relevant to the needs of the growing gaming industry on the island, according to **Joseph Cuschieri**, the Executive Chairman of the recently rebranded Malta Gaming Authority. In an extensive interview with **Jo Caruana**, Mr Cuschieri expresses optimism on the outlook of the gaming industry in Malta, which is currently employing - directly or indirectly - over 8,000 people in Malta, stressing that his aim is to bring Malta's reputation and performance in the sector to the very top of the global league.



Research shows that online gaming's Gross Gaming Revenue (GGR - stakes minus winnings) in the EU28 is expected to rise from €10.9 billion in 2013 to €13.27 billion in 2015.

In 2015, it's hard to imagine Malta without iGaming. The industry has become a fundamental part of our economic make-up over the past decade or so, and, with over 8,000 people directly or indirectly employed by the sector, we have come to need it as much as it needs us.

And we are part of a wider boom. Research shows that online gaming's Gross Gaming Revenue (GGR - stakes minus winnings) in the EU28 is expected to rise from €10.9 billion in 2013 to €13.27 billion in 2015.

Locally, right at the very core of the

local gaming industry is the Malta Gaming Authority (previously the Lotteries and Gaming Authority), which is responsible for all sorts of activities related to the sector. And, at its helm, is the authority's recently-appointed executive chairman Joseph Cuschieri, who previously occupied senior management positions at the Malta Communications Authority and at Vodafone Malta.

"The general outlook for Malta and the gaming sector is very good, as long as we keep overcoming the challenges and convert opportunities into economic

benefits in a timely manner," Mr Cuschieri tells me.

"Yes, the gaming industry has certainly made its mark. There are currently 280 companies holding 468 active licenses locally (at end January 2015). In fact, the extent of the economic importance of the gaming sector in Malta is irrefutable. The land-based and remote sectors together contribute more than €52 million a year directly into the state coffers in the forms of gaming taxes."

And, apart from this direct contribution and the increasing number of jobs it creates, there is a significant degree of indirect contribution from the services used by these companies in their operations, such as ICT services, office rents, corporate services and personal services consumed by the employees like rents and other personal expenses. "Plus, since the products and services given by remote gaming companies are largely exported, it leaves a very significant positive effect on Malta's balance of trade," the chairman continues.

The ongoing evolution of the sector requires that the relevant authority keep up. Thus, since Mr Cuschieri moved into his new role, the MGA has begun a transformative process, including a complete rebranding exercise.

"Rebranding, yes, but it is so much more than that and a far deeper endeavour," he continues. "It is substantive and reflective of what we stand for today and in the future. In fact, we have reviewed all of our internal systems and processes, and made significant improvements already."

In part, the authority's shift in name, from the Lotteries and Gaming Authority to the Malta Gaming Authority, may not be very different, but merely removes the specific reference to 'lotteries' which are still considered as gaming. Malta, meanwhile, has been inserted to help brand the authority internationally. "Though a minor factor, it also reflects the consistency with which we approach our regulatory functions, irrespective of the game and channel used," says Mr Cuschieri.

"The land-based and remote sectors together contribute more than €52 million a year directly into the state coffers in the forms of gaming taxes."





"There are currently 280 companies holding 468 active licenses locally."

"Our plan, including the overhaul of the regulatory framework, is more than a mere update but an ambitious step forward, as Malta aims to make the quantum leap necessary to become the centre of excellence."

In addition, the change in name and rebranding also coincides with the legal provision made for the establishment of Gaming Malta - a foundation that will be solely responsible for the promotion of Malta as a centre of gaming excellence and which has a separate function from the regulatory function of the authority.

"Our plan, including the overhaul of the regulatory framework, is more than a mere update but an ambitious step forward, as Malta aims to make the quantum leap necessary to become the centre of excellence. This will occur both in relation to

it as a jurisdiction, as well as an economic hub for gaming and ancillary services, and both are equally valid economic contributors and critical components to the gaming industry," he says.

"And while the regulatory and economic objectives may sound contradictory for the gaming sector, we are considering them as essentially complementary and within our strategic reality, mutually re-enforcing. In a sector as regulated as gaming (which is similar to financial services), the soundness of the regulatory framework and



“With the political and stakeholder support I am receiving, I am certain that Malta’s future looks encouraging.”

institutional robustness are indeed the road to success in economic terms,” he continues.

The chairman also stresses that the next three years will be transformative for Malta.

“It really is essential for Malta to make the necessary reforms to add value for the industry within its operating environment,” he explains. “By which I

mean the state-by-state regulation and the rising compliance costs, as well as the importance of remaining responsive and thus relevant to the needs of the industry.”

Finally, Mr Cuschieri believes his goals for what he wants to achieve match what Malta wants to achieve in the gaming sector. “My aim is to bring both the authority’s and Malta’s performance and reputation to the

very top of the global league.

“I am focused on making an increasingly positive contribution to the industry, without any of the avoidable harm to society that is usually associated with gaming. With the political and stakeholder support I am receiving, I am certain that Malta’s future looks encouraging. We have a lot to work for, and a lot to look forward to.” **cc**

# PANORAMIC DINING AT IL-VEDUTA.

BREATHTAKING VIEWS.  
MEDITERRANEAN FOOD.  
SOOTHING AMBIENCE.



ENJOY A WIDE SELECTION OF MEDITERRANEAN PIZZA, PASTA, AND GRILLS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN A WARM SOOTHING AMBIENCE.



**CALL: 21 45 55 00**  
Or view our menu & order online at  
**WWW.VEDUTA.COM.MT**  
*Our Pizzas are delivered in warmers direct to your door*

**WE DELIVER TO: RABAT, MDINA, DINGLI, BAHRIJA, MGARR, ZEBBIEGH, BURMARRAD, ST PAUL'S BAY, MOSTA, NAXXAR, GHARGHUR, IKLIN, MAGHTAB, ATTARD, ZEBBUG, LIJA, BALZAN, MRIEHEL, SIGGIEWI, BIRKIRKARA, QORMI**

IS-SAQQAJJA, RABAT. TEL 21454666 / 21453656. EMAIL: info@veduta.com.mt