

## **Google conference opening address by the Executive Chairman of the Malta Gaming Authority, Joseph Cuschieri held at the Mediterranean Conference Centre, Valletta on Tuesday, 28 April 2015.**

This is not a game of thrones – regulation, social responsibility, consumer protection and technological innovation can co-exist, thrive and prosper in the same space for mutual success.

Google - Welcome to Malta! I hope you have a successful country presentation in Malta – the hub of gaming in Europe.

It is an honour for me to deliver the opening address and I thank you for this opportunity. There is no doubt about the impact of technology on the fast evolving world of gaming. Google has and continues to push the boundaries, accessibility and development of player experience potential in this dynamic and exiting entertainment world!

Malta is credited with being the first European Union member state to regulate online gaming. It is still the biggest online gaming jurisdiction in Europe (by number of companies) and hosts and licenses a number of its biggest protagonists in the industry. In fact, we have labeled Malta as Europe's iGaming Capital.

As a result of its position, Malta is also the voice of experience and awareness of industry development within the EU policy fora and we strive to keep abreast and be proactive rather than lagging behind in our policy and regulatory approach. We want to be thought leaders and leverage our experience and know how to fine tune regulatory policy and contribute to the global debates on the various facets of gaming policy.

By fostering and embracing technological advancement, innovators like Google, give us policy makers a front-row view - and therefore an opportunity to embed the innovation and development trends in our policies and implementation strategies, and hence, regulation. Our aims for the governance of this sector - (promotion of technological innovation and growth together with smart/responsible regulation) - may seem in conflict but indeed they sustain each other.

Malta has embarked on a new and exciting journey of change in order to remain proactive and innovative. Critical in our change agenda is the further development of an already well developed and sophisticated gaming eco-system with the launch of the first Gaming Academy later on this year in order to further develop knowledge and skill within the gaming industry. Equally critical in raising the bar is the complete overhaul of our regulatory and legal framework which is due to be completed by the first quarter of 2016. Our objective is to have a new legislative framework which is cutting edge, innovative and forward looking taking into account the shifting trends in gambling and gaming in general.

We recognise that most of the rapidly shifting trends in gambling and gaming are due to the rapid pace of technological innovation. May I mention a few from the player perspective:

**Technology convergence:** One very salient trend is that technology hardware and platforms are becoming increasingly convergent (e.g. internet access via mobile devices and interactive television). There is increasing multi-media integration such as gambling and gaming via social networking sites in addition to converged hardware and content.

**Gambling via social networking sites:** The launch of the first gambling for money game (i.e., Bingo Friendly) on Facebook in August 2012 received worldwide media interest and other gambling-type games are popular on Facebook and other social media. Even when games do not involve money (e.g., playing poker for points on Facebook), it introduces players (including youth) to the principles and excitement of gambling – and therefore player experience.

**Mobile gambling:** One of the key drivers behind the increased number of people gambling online and using social networking sites is the huge rise in mobile gambling and gaming. Google and Android powered devices are synonymous with this trend taking into account that android has a global market share of 76%. There are now hundreds of gambling companies who provide casino-style games to be downloaded onto the gambler's smartphone or mobile device (e.g., tablet or laptop). Mobile phones provide the convenience of making bets or gambling on line from wherever the person is, even if they are on the move.

Although the examples I have just mentioned can potentially be used to provide multiple platforms and mobility for access to igaming content, legislation and regulatory policy needs to shape up to cater for the dynamic mobile world of gaming. This shaping up should include mechanisms to allow innovation and user experience development while at the same time applying such technologies to enhance consumer protection and help players to control or limit their gambling behaviour.

This is our technological philosophy from a regulator's perspective. Sound regulation should not stifle innovation and growth. On the contrary, they should complement each other. It is not one or the other – it is not a game of thrones!

With that thought, I thank you for your attention and wish you a good conference.

**ENDS**