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The MGA Publishes its Interim Performance Report for the Gaming Industry for the Period January to June 2020

The Malta Gaming Authority (MGA/Authority) has published its Interim Performance Report for the period between January to June 2020. The report looks at the performance of the MGA, highlighting major projects undertaken throughout the same period. The report also includes a section highlighting the key performance indicators for the first half of 2020 as well as a medium-term outlook into the future, followed by a detailed report explaining key statistics for the land-based and online gaming sectors in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following are the key highlights from the Interim Report:

- During the first six months of 2020, the MGA and the Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit (FIAU) signed an updated version of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which brought forth better co-operative instruments for the supervision of Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) in the gaming sector;
- In order to raise awareness on AML/CFT, during the first half of 2020 the MGA organised a training session for the industry by means of a webinar. This focused mainly on common AML/CFT shortcomings, the emerging money laundering and terrorism financing (ML/TF) threats, and typologies in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and Digital ID methods, including a question-and-answers session with FIAU representatives;
- The MGA's Fit & Proper Committee held 20 meetings throughout the first six months of 2020 with a total of 132 decisions taken. The Committee issued a total of five refusals of individuals and companies, due to them being assessed as not fit and proper on the basis of mitigating the risks of ML/TF. Furthermore, the Committee issued 35 conditional verdicts whereby further information and/or documentation was required to proceed with the final decision. The remaining decisions taken during the first six months of 2020 were pertinent to procedural matters in light of the limitations imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- During the period under review, a Consultation Paper on Suspicious Betting Reporting Requirements & Other Sports Integrity Measures was published in preparation for the implementation of the Suspicious Betting Reporting Requirements which will oblige Business-to-Consumer licensees offering betting on sporting events to inform the Authority of any instance of suspicious betting;
- Recognising the importance of establishing data-sharing agreements with relevant stakeholders, including sport governing bodies and other platforms whose function includes the detection of suspicious betting activities, the MGA signed a total of four agreements, namely a data-sharing agreement with the International Cricket Council, the Swedish Football Association, the Darts Regulation Authority and the World Professional Billiards & Snooker Association;

- Between January and June 2020, the Commercial Communication Committee of the MGA has taken action against 10 adverts or promotions that, in the opinion of the Committee, inappropriately exploited the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Between January and June 2020, following information which emerged from compliance audits, compliance reviews, and formal investigations, the Authority issued 11 warnings, suspended two licences, and cancelled another seven. In addition, the MGA issued a total of nine administrative fines;
- The Authority has received 40 international co-operation requests and has sent 25 such requests. These covered various areas, including sports integrity, criminal activity by players, adverse media reports, locally licensed operators and entities not holding a licence, as well as the Authority's authorisation process and the regulatory regime;
- In order to facilitate the on-going close communication between authorities and the effective sharing of information, the Authority entered into an MoU with the Malta Business Registry;
- In its efforts to boost knowledge sharing and co-operation with international counterparts, the MGA has hosted a delegation of members of the Lotteries and Gaming Board and the Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Zimbabwe;
- During the period under review, a total of 833 criminal probity screening tests were carried out, covering both land-based and remote gaming activities; and
- During the first six months of 2020 the Player Support Unit received a total of 2,431 requests for assistance and resolved 2,433 queries (with the latter covering some requests which were still pending at the end of 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has affected players differently and as a result a 38% increase year-on-year was registered in the number of requests received during this period.

The MGA will publish a full-year industry performance report in May 2021 when it publishes its Annual Report for the financial year ending 31 December 2020.

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