Press release

National lotteries for the benefit of European society

Brussels, 11 June 2020 – Lottery executives, direct beneficiaries of lottery funding and EU policymakers came together this week via an online webinar to discuss the role of national lotteries for the benefit of European society. The webinar which gathered over 180 participants, was organised by The European Lotteries (EL) under the patronage of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU. [1]

National lotteries in Europe have traditionally played an important role in financially supporting their communities. They have proven to work successfully for generations to protect their players and provide a consistent source of financing for the benefit of society. Without national lotteries, European society, culture, and welfare would be 21 billion EUR poorer, as they directly support valuable projects related to sport, science, education, art, and vulnerable individuals with disabilities.

As the moderator, EL Secretary General Arjan van ‘t Veer opened the discussion by highlighting the importance of national lotteries as a sustainable and fundamental source of income to support good causes in Europe. During the Covid–19 pandemic, lotteries have continued to fulfil their core values of responsibility, sustainability, and integrity by supporting communities throughout this difficult time. Campaigns have been adapted to aid the healthcare sector, for example with the funding of medical equipment, as well as delivering daily essential supplies to care homes and creating emergency funds. [2]

Hrvoje Mršić from the Permanent Representation of Croatia to the EU welcomed participants on behalf of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

“The past months have been challenging for the Presidency which has had to adapt to new ways of remote working for its high–level meetings and the initiatives it supports. No other Presidency has had to face such a situation, but the show must go on!” said Mr Mršić. “We are delighted to grant our patronage to this webinar, acknowledging the importance attached to the topics raised and the good work lotteries do for the benefit of society.”

At a time when national and local government funding is in ever shorter supply, the challenges faced by communities across Europe are ever more complete. The current widespread and successful economic model of national lotteries is the optimal one, as it provides secure games in a controlled and safe environment for consumers and grants a sustainable and consistent financial support to European society. Now more than ever, it is
vital to safeguard the benefits of national lotteries for society and support national gambling policies through the principle of subsidiarity.

**EPP MEP Pablo Arias Echeverría from Spain** highlighted the important work of EL Member Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE) who’s social role in Spain is very well known, focusing on the inclusion of people living with disabilities for example, in education and the labour market.

“We have to promote models based on responsibility and if possible, social work behind them.” said Mr Arias Echeverría. From a policy perspective, he outlined the work of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) Committee in the European Parliament which is currently working on a report on the future Digital Services Act, including a reform of the e-commerce Directive. Mr Arias Echeverría adds, “It is also important to establish clear rules on gambling activities to protect the most vulnerable”.

From the lottery perspective **Stéphane Pallez, CEO and President of Française des Jeux (FDJ)** emphasised the importance of 85 years of solidarity from the national lottery in France and its contributions to national wealth annually – in 2019, EUR 3,9 billion went to state budget, including support to specific actions such as sport events and national heritage.

“Lotteries act for society! The Covid-19 pandemic has given us the opportunity to showcase our solidarity once again. Special measures taken during this difficult time have given us the momentum to reinforce our commitments and complete our “raison d’être”, aiming at including in its bylaws the company’s purpose for the benefit of society”, said Mrs Pallez. “FDJ has taken several priority measures to protect players and retailers during the pandemic, such as helping and providing masks to our retailers still open during the lockdown, adapting our responsible gaming messages and suspending some lottery products not consistent with health and sanitary rules and providing masks to retailers”.

Dedicated initiatives have directly supported the health care sector for example, donations of time off by FDJ employees to reduce costs and support hospitals, as well as assistance to Associations such as Secours Populaire Français to support the delivering of daily essential supplies to the elderly in their homes.

**Mario Musa, CEO of Hrvatska Lutrija** outlined that benefiting society is inherent in each lottery game and in Croatia, recent research has shown that players are aware, and support this. In its 47 years of existence, Hrvatska Lutrija has secured 2,6 billion HRK for a wide range of projects including for example, the Croatian Olympic Centre, Tesla Memorial Centre, and the Croatian Red Cross.

“To emphasis the important role of our lottery, as our slogan said during the 2018 World Cup, little nation, big dreams!” said Mr Musa. “It is important to find the right balance between economic interest and responsibility towards the players which is crucial in the
lottery sector. Our dedication to consumer protection and corporate social responsibility sets us apart from private commercial operators, and we are happy that our players are aware of that”.

During Covid–19, the Croatian lottery has used this period to incite positive regulatory changes in the country, most notably with regard to problem gambling and consumer protection, recently funding research on the topic. March was a particularly difficult time for Hrvatska Lutrija as Zagreb was hit by an earthquake. The Board and many employees spared a percentage of their salaries and donated them to the fund dedicated to reconstruction of the city.

Following these discussions, participants heard from a direct beneficiary of lottery funding, adding weight to the argument that the national lottery model needs to be safeguarded by policymakers.

Lottery funding has long traditions in the Finnish civil society and Mental Health Finland (MIELI) is just one example of a beneficiary that receives most of its funding from the state lottery system, either via the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health or the Ministry of Education and Culture. Sari Aalto–Matturi, Executive Director of MIELI highlighted that the funding system has had a big effect on the vitality of the Finnish civil society, enabling thousands of Associations to engage in advocacy work, provide support and help to those who need it.

“MIELI is the oldest mental health Association in the world, founded in 1897, which promotes mental health and prevents mental health disorders in all age groups; offers crisis help online, by phone and at 22 dedicated crisis centres nationwide. The Association has provided crisis support in Finland since 1970 and during the Covid–19 pandemic, incoming calls to the helpline have doubled – normally the helpline receives around 55,000 calls per year” said Mrs Aalto–Matturi.

Following several questions from the audience, EL Secretary General Arjan van 't Veer concluded the webinar by highlighting the importance of sustaining the current widespread model of national lotteries in Europe and safeguarding the benefits of national lotteries for society.

EL’s latest publication “For the Benefit of Society” presents its core values and the ways in which lotteries contribute meaningfully to society including healthcare, culture, and sport [3]. Nationally licensed and regulated lotteries have proved to work successfully for generations. They continue to be a transparent and consistent source of financing for the benefit of society.

ENDS

Notes
[1] Recording of the webinar
  https://www.benefit4society.eu/supporting-communities-against-covid-19/

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About the European Lotteries
The European Lotteries Association (EL) is the European umbrella organisation of national lotteries operating games of chance for the public benefit. EL has members from more than 40 European countries including all EU Member States. The association’s EU members contribute more than 20 billion EUR p.a. to the state budgets and the funding of sport, culture, social projects, research and other causes of general interest. Unlike many commercial online gambling operators, EL members only offer gambling and betting services in the jurisdictions in which they are licensed by the respective national government. Website: www.european-lotteries.org, Twitter @EuropeLotteries, LinkedIn