

# An exciting time

**Alexander Haberl**, regulatory development manager EMEA at Gaming Laboratories International, tracks the progress of the company in eastern Europe over the past two decades plus

## **INTERGAMINGi: How long has GLI been doing business in eastern Europe and what is the story behind its entry into that market?**

It was around the year 2000 when the first central eastern European markets started the process of developing technical regulations for the gaming sector.

Because gaming is not subject to EU-wide regulation, western European markets have historically developed individual solutions for the regulation of land-based gaming. That resulted in a lot of variations in regulation across western European jurisdictions. However, you can see elements of GLI-11 in many jurisdictions covering land-based gaming.

Eastern European jurisdictions, however, were effectively starting from scratch and they decided to develop a more unified approach to regulation across the region. Because GLI standards are well known across the globe, GLI worked in an advisory capacity with eastern European regulators, working with them to create tailored solutions based on international regulation best practices.

## **Which jurisdictions in the region are traditionally the strongest and which are up and coming?**

As an independent lab, we will leave the determination of stronger performing jurisdictions to the analysts. What we will say is regulation of various types of gaming has been progressing at an impressive rate across the region and we are continually impressed with the willingness of regulators to embrace new technologies.

Once again, GLI has played a key role in providing regulatory bodies with information to assist in maintaining robust technology-free regulation.

## **Are there particular challenges in the region not faced elsewhere in the world?**

Because many CEE jurisdictions had little experience with the gaming industry, regulators had to build the legal and technical competence very quickly. The demand from local operators and first-time suppliers was fast-moving and dynamic and all jurisdictions needed to adapt existing bodies to act as gaming boards for the future.

CEE markets have only had a few years to establish structures and processes that have been matured in other jurisdictions over decades. That's given them the advantage of being able to learn and benefit from other well-organised regulators and markets across the world and avoid some of the same pitfalls.

Once again, GLI standards played a key role in assisting regulators in providing the structure

needed for technical standards. The progress in CEE gaming over a short period of time has been impressive and is now seen as a modern, trend-setting jurisdiction that other European markets can also learn from.

## **Who are the people responsible for GLI in the region and when did the company open its Polish office?**

GLI established an office in Krakow, Poland, in 2010. GLI Europe and GLI Austria became the first labs of their kind authorised to test casino and street market gaming equipment and perform field inspections in Poland.

One of the benefits of working with GLI is that our clients have access to a global team of experts and the client's day-to-day contact will be with someone who is an expert in that specific jurisdiction along with speaking in the local language, which is key to understand the nuances of technical regulation. We have CEE experts within the team, and they all work closely with CEE customers and regulators.

I myself am a dedicated expert working with customers in CEE to ensure they are ready to enter new markets and to ensure they are prepared for any significant changes to existing regulations.

We share our expertise and insights with customers to help them stay one step ahead and be in the best position possible to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

## **What has been the progress recently in the development of online gaming in eastern Europe?**

Most CEE markets are already regulated online jurisdictions or preparing for partial liberalisation. Albania and Hungary are also considering regulating online sports betting. We also see new gaming ideas introduced in markets like Bulgaria and Romania first before they become popular in other European countries.

In certain CEE jurisdictions, there is already a merging of land-based and online technologies where land-based terminal machines operate based on online platform technology. This is a product solution that is currently booming in the US in the sports betting sector, where GLI-33 is being widely adopted.

This is an exciting time for gaming in CEE and around the world. As technology moves forward, suppliers and regulators are relying on GLI standards such as GLI-19: Interactive Gaming Systems v2.0 and GLI-33: Event Wagering Systems v1.1, to help them streamline development and adoption.

## **How do you see the gaming industry in the region shaping up in the future?**

CEE markets seem too often be underestimated in terms of their potential. In reality, eastern European gaming equipment suppliers and operators are already big players in the international gaming industry, with many dominant product sectors like electronic table gaming and online sports betting on a global basis.

The CEE gaming industry has developed in an incomparable and outstanding way over the last 10 years and continues to progress.

Many CEE manufacturers, in their relatively new regulated home markets, had to comply with the same technical standards used in other international jurisdictions.

That presents a considerable opportunity for CEE operators and manufacturers to expand their businesses globally, as many of their products are mostly already compliant with regulations in other jurisdictions.

Eastern European countries are known for their excellent engineers, developers and creative people. As the gaming industry in CEE is quite young, many of the people within the industry are too. We are seeing a lot of start-ups and smaller dynamic companies in this market developing unique new product ideas using high-end technology.

Over the next decade, we expect the eastern European gaming markets to continue to expand and gain in importance and relevance for the global gaming industry. It's an exciting time to be involved in gaming in CEE and GLI is looking forward to helping customers maximise the opportunities and their success.

