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The MGA publishes its 2020 Annual Report and Financial Statements

The Malta Gaming Authority (MGA/Authority) is publishing its Annual Report and audited Financial Statements for the financial year ending 31 December 2020. The report provides an overview of the work performed throughout the year and highlights major projects undertaken by the Authority throughout the same period. In addition, the report also outlines the performance of the Maltese gaming industry during 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 Annual Report covering the year 2020:

- Between January and December 2020, following information which emerged from compliance audits, compliance reviews, and formal investigations, the Authority issued 69 warnings, suspended 3 licences, and cancelled another 12. In addition, the MGA issued a total of 24 administrative penalties.
- In 2020, 30 compliance audits were conducted by the Compliance and AML function, one of which related to a live studio, and 324 desktop reviews were carried out, of which 98 identified deficiencies which were accordingly escalated to the Compliance and Enforcement Committee.
- In 2020, 8 individuals and companies were deemed not to be up to the Authority's probity standards by the Fit & Proper Committee, mainly on the basis of mitigating the risks of money laundering or funding of terrorism.
- During the twelve-month period of 2020, a total of 1,475 criminal probity screening checks were undertaken, an increase of 13.5% when compared to the year 2019.
- In terms of AML/CFT, during the twelve-month period of 2020, a total of 27 supervisory examinations on online gaming licensees were conducted by the MGA, of which 10 were full scope examinations, 3 were targeted examinations, 8 were thematic examinations, and 6 were supervisory meetings.
- In 2020, the MGA conducted a total of 65 interviews with prospective MLROs and key persons carrying out the AML/CFT function to determine the knowledge and suitability of each candidate, out of which 40 were approved, 17 were conditionally approved and 8 were rejected.
- The Commercial Communication Committee of the MGA took action against 10 adverts or promotions that, in the opinion of the Committee, inappropriately exploited the COVID-19 pandemic.
- During 2020 the Player Support Unit received a total of 5,625 requests for assistance, a 58% increase over 2019, potentially stemming at least partly from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on player behaviour.
- In its efforts to boost knowledge sharing and cooperation with international counterparts, the MGA 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.

- The Authority received 67 international cooperation requests from other regulators and sent 47 such requests, with the majority referring to requests for background checks as part of an authorisation process.
- During the year 2020, a total of 168 requests for information specifically relating to the manipulation of sports competitions or breaches in sports rules were submitted by enforcement agencies, sport governing bodies, integrity units, and other regulatory bodies. Additionally, a total of 288 suspicious betting reports from licensees and other concerned parties were received.
- During the period under review, the Authority was a direct participant in 20 different investigations across the globe relating to manipulation of sports competitions or breaches in sports rules.
- 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 five agreements, namely a data sharing agreement with the International Cricket Council, the Swedish Football Association, the Darts Regulation Authority, the World Professional Billiards & Snooker Association, and the Slovak Football Association.
- During 2020, the MGA and the FIAU signed an updated version of the MoU which brought forth better cooperative instruments for the supervision of AML/CFT in the gaming sector.
- The Authority entered into an MoU with the Malta Business Registry with the aim of facilitating the ongoing close communication between authorities and the effective sharing of information.
- With the aim of increasing cooperation with our international counterparts, an MoU was agreed to by the MGA and the Dutch Kansspelautoriteit (the Dutch Gambling Authority) on the basis that the two authorities will support each other by sharing best practices and information in support of their responsibilities at law, whilst also engaging in discussions on policy matters of interest.
- The MGA also enhanced its collaboration with the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations by creating a process whereby any entity that applies for a non-profit game is only issued with a permit if such an entity is a registered and compliant voluntary organisation.
- Recognising the importance of regular dialogue with stakeholders, throughout 2020, over 55 external communications were sent, providing a synopsis of various updates and developments within the Authority and industry.

In publishing this report, the CEO, Dr Carl Brincat said: "The year 2020 will undoubtedly be remembered for the challenges the pandemic presented us with, and I am proud of the Authority's employees who worked tirelessly to ensure that we continued to perform the functions required of us at law. Keeping the ship steady during a challenging year serves as a strong foundation for us to look ahead with renewed commitment to keep building on the positives and improve on our shortcomings, to reach new heights in our regulatory approach."

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