



VEIKKAUS DRIVES FORWARD ITS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES WHILE FINLAND RESTRUCTURES ITS GAMBLING SYSTEM

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PGRI INTRODUCTION: Around the world, policy-makers and regulators are sprinting to catch up with an industry that no longer waits. The way games of chance are marketed and delivered to players is shifting at a breathtaking pace—driven by digital platforms, shifting consumer habits, and surging play-ership. These transformations bring with them urgent public policy questions, particularly around problem gambling, consumer protection, and market integrity.

The regulatory questions that arise are not unique to any one country. They echo across borders: How do we articulate public policy before drafting the laws meant to enforce it? How do we safeguard vulnerable players without stifling innovation or individual freedom? How do we preserve market integrity—fairness, stability and equilibrium in a competitive market? How do we enforce the laws and defend regulated systems from the shadow economy of unlicensed illegal operators? These are just a few of the issues that transcend borders and affect jurisdiction all across the world.

These are global questions. And to answer them, we look to those jurisdictions that are not just keeping up with change—but helping to shape it. Enter Finland: a nation whose quiet efficiency has often masked its pio-

neering spirit. In 1996, it became the first country in the world to legalize and regulate online lottery sales, blazing a digital trail that others would follow. Today, Finland—and indeed its Nordic neighbors as well— require player identification for all games of chance, whether online or in retail. Now, in its most sweeping reform to date, Finland is transitioning from a monopoly model to a multi-license system in key product categories, even as it preserves exclusive rights for lottery.

The stakes are high, the process is complex—and the implications are global. I have found the reporting on Finland’s regulatory reform helpful but usually leaving me with more questions than understanding. That’s why I’m especially grateful to Olli Sarekoski for taking the time to provide his clear and thoughtful perspective. Olli also articulates how Veikkaus is confronting disruption not as a threat, but as a proving ground for reinvention. His vision is not merely about adapting—it’s about leading; it’s about transforming regulatory overhaul into strategic momentum, and reaffirming the value of a purpose-driven lottery in an increasingly competitive landscape.



Paul Jason: Finland is heading towards license model – current feelings?

Olli Sarekoski: The reform of the gambling system is expected and welcome. It will be a great opportunity for Veikkaus, and we have worked long-term to prepare for the near future. Our vision is to be a respected and successful international money gaming group by 2030. We want to

continuously develop ourselves in the spirit of our new mission of “we passionately drive better gaming”.

How has Veikkaus been preparing for the future overall?

O. Srekoski: We have been pushing data-driven culture to achieve our ambitious goal to become the most data-driven gaming company in the

world – utilizing AI as one of the core value drivers. Already, we are utilizing AI in Veikkaus’ web site and mobile app, digital marketing, betting odds, responsible gaming, compliance and naturally generative AI to improve efficiency.

Veikkaus’s in-house Game Studio was transferred few months ago to Veikkaus subsidiary Fennica Gaming. This strategic

move brought game development and B2B sales under the same roof thus streamlining operations. We design and produce high-quality games for Finnish and international markets using the latest technologies. We utilize powerful modern software and cloud technologies for the implementation of our gaming services.

We have been extremely goal-oriented in recruiting top-notch professionals, including game, front-end, and back-end developers, cloud specialists, architects, data engineers, and mathematicians - not to mention cyber security and quality assurance experts. Our team delivers only the best, both B2B and B2C.

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Now, as Finland restructures its gambling system we are investing heavily in renewal and development work to be ready when Finland transitions to a partial multi-license system for gambling by the beginning of 2027. As I mentioned in the beginning, our vision is clear and ambitious towards 2030. We have three clear strategic priorities:

1. Responsible market leader in Finland
2. Significant international business
3. Goal-oriented, efficient and productive team

As part of preparing for the upcoming market change, we have already divided our domestic business areas to correspond to the product division in the new gambling market. Now we have Lottery and Land-Based Gaming, where Veikkaus will keep the monopoly, and then we operate Betting and iCasino – a portfolio which will be open for competition.

You are targeting to be the responsible market leader in Finland after the market is reregulated?

O. Sarekoski: Yes, all our actions are aimed at this result. Our strategic priori-

ties help us to navigate towards this goal.

Let’s talk about these strategic priorities. First, responsible market leader in Finland: How do you achieve that in the upcoming license model?

O. Sarekoski: Inside Betting and iCasino business area, our actions are massive due the fact that our target and identified need is to be extremely competitive. We have a new sportsbook platform, OpenBet, which was selected after a tender process. We have opted to integrate new PAM and CRM platforms. The scope of the several development streams is massive. Currently, for example, ongoing processes

include new website frontends and apps. Our in-house trading team will create a competitive advantage while generating in-house odds. Veikkaus has already increased the player playback rates to improve the offering and the product’s price perception. We are heavily focusing on improving the consumer experience all the time – powered and supported by our strong brand.

Lottery and Land Based Gaming also require new development. Product development is an important part of maintaining Veikkaus’ game range even after the upcoming reform. The launch of Milli was executed in early June this year. Milli is Veikkaus’ newest draw game, with a jackpot of one million euros every single day. The new game Milli (a Finnish abbreviation of the word million) has been an important and long-anticipated update to Veikkaus’ product portfolio. The first few months have been really successful. We are extremely happy and proud that the product itself, using our own platform, has already attracted international interest.

At the same time, it is naturally crucial to develop sustainability, and we have

made massive steps. A few years ago, we repositioned ourselves and created an even safer and more responsible gaming environment. Starting from the beginning of 2024, all Veikkaus games have required identification, with scratchcards being the latest addition. Consequently, we have comprehensive customer data available to prevent and reduce gambling harm. We have updated the harm prediction model predicting risk behavior and developed the care model. We have also piloted care calls particularly targeting young adults.

Secondly you mentioned significant international business?

O. Sarekoski: Our tool for this is Veikkaus subsidiary Fennica Gaming. Fennica Gaming, powered by Veikkaus, started its operations in 2022 and within three years the company has achieved impressive results and positive reception. Fennica Gaming first strengthened its B2B position in the eInstant market. At the same time, the company has expanded its product portfolio by offering slot games and delivering online casino games to internationally licensed operators. Our games are now live in 15 countries and 3 continents — superb start! Currently Fennica Gaming is naturally seeking strong growth and scalability. Latest achievements include, for example, a B2B license in Greece and a Gaming Related Vendor License in the UAE. Clearly, our strategic choice — exporting unique Nordic gaming services and content — has proven to be spot on.

All above requires talented staff, right?

O. Sarekoski: Agreed, and that is why our third strategic priority is building a goal-oriented, efficient, and productive team. Veikkaus’ transformation is significantly boosted by talent acquisition. We have already hired several experienced iGaming experts into key positions and simultaneously we have recruited and continue to recruit representatives from the entertainment industry – to make sure that we are well positioned while targeting towards consumer’s entertainment wallet.

At the same time this is really tech driven industry and to give perspective on how our team is evolving: solely in 2024 we hired a total of 99 new tech professionals.

Could you describe or clarify the ways in which the regulatory model has changed over the last few years, and what it will

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look like when this “reform” project is completed at the end of this year?

O. Sarekoski: The big picture is that Veikkaus has held the exclusive right, but that has existed only on paper. Latest estimates show that annual offshore gross gaming revenue might be between 600–900 million euros. There is a clear and widely recognized need to update our model, and existing legislative reform is based on the Government Program, which was published summer 2023. Parliament will accept a legislative proposal, most likely during this autumn. There is a clear need for all operators to receive, before actual operations begin, as the most transparent possible guidelines related to marketing, duty of care -model and many other operational details. This is a long process.

What are the most relevant impacts of these changes on the way the Veikkaus operates in Finland?

O. Sarekoski: Veikkaus existing game portfolio is already definitely comprehensive and thus quite unique. We offer all possible money games on both channels. As a result of the reform, we keep the monopoly for example in lottery-type games, scratch cards and physical slot machines while betting (including horse betting) and online casino moves into a license model. Veikkaus will naturally apply for a license to operate these license model games. The exclusive operations and operations in competitive markets will be separated into different companies within the same Veikkaus group.

Under the new regulatory system, can commercial operators offer games that resemble the lottery game-playing experience? Lacking payment and IP blocking, do Finland consumers have access to “synthetic lotteries” like Lottoland?

O. Sarekoski: It is important that there is and there will continue to be clear differences, which consumers recognized, between game categories. Soon-to-be licensed offerings can’t resemble the lottery playing experience. Product differences must remain.

The current reform does not include any payment or IP blocking methods. Blocking is not proposed for adoption at this stage. So, at least in the near future, Finnish consumer will have access to these “synthetic lotteries”. The lack of blocking naturally challenges the government program, which has a goal of improving the channelization rate.

Does this change to a multiple-operator competitive marketplace alter the fundamental mission or the methods of business operations, i.e., maximizing playership and revenues, etc. of Veikkaus?

O. Sarekoski: The license model naturally means that there will be several, most likely a few dozen, legal operators. Veikkaus task is to match and exceed our consumers expectations – naturally, all this is done within the defined regulatory framework. From a competition perspective, the new reform creates, above all, a level playing field which we warmly welcome.

Will there be a competitive equilibrium between Veikkaus and commercial operators, i.e., with neither having a decisive competitive advantage? For instance, will the amount that Veikkaus is required to turn over to the government be the same as the amount that licensed operators are taxed? Will advertising restrictions apply equally to all?

O. Sarekoski: This might be one of the most monitored and supervised items: all operators in all aspects need to be treated equally. That is the basis, and we expect nothing else. Regarding operating income, our position remains unchanged and stands out: all Veikkaus’s proceeds benefit our society.

It would seem that turning Finland’s online gambling regulatory framework into a competitive consumer marketplace—with multiple operators competing to increase gambling revenues—is more likely to increase demand, increase playership, and increase amounts gambled. Why does the Ministry of Finance think this will “reduce gambling-related harm”?

O. Sarekoski: The current model, from a Finnish perspective, is clearly some short of “Wild West” where almost half of consumption, once again from a Finnish perspective, is unregulated and untaxed. When the overall channelization rate, like here in Finland, is only somewhere between 50–60%, it is clear that at least chance to successfully regulate is kind of a lost case. I firmly believe that a regulated environment is always a safer choice — something that is worth pursuing. So first, the vast majority of gaming consumption must be brought back under regulation so that, for example, work on preventing gambling problems can even succeed. Of course, having said all that, lacking payment and IP blocking will continue to challenge the upcoming reform.

You have always been a visionary innovator, adapting to disruption to reposition Veikkaus to deliver ever more value to its players and stakeholders. How will Veikkaus be changing over the next two to three years to preserve its position of strength and sustainability?

O. Sarekoski: Globally money gaming is a growth business – but digital gaming is still underdeveloped. I believe that to succeed, operators, including lotteries like Veikkaus, must reach sufficient size and seek growth from an extensive portfolio, partnerships and internationalization. Value is created when operators embrace scalable structure, technology, and operating models.

Transformation must be seen as a continuous process; we have lived it already for several years and the journey continues. Now Veikkaus is facing a new and interesting chapter as Finland moves towards a license model. So our transformation journey keeps ongoing. This journey has already demanded and will continue to demand a lot from our skilled personnel. I am proud of the Veikkaus team’s remarkable ability to embrace the opportunity to change, innovate, and turn challenge into opportunity. ■