

GAMBLING INDUSTRY: WILL SLOVAKIA HAVE THE BIGGEST CASINO IN CENTRAL EUROPE?



The Slovak Republic recently enacted a new gambling law making the country more attractive to gamblers. A new project including the biggest casino in central Europe might turn Bratislava into European Las Vegas.

The Slovak government has recently expressed its support to a new project that includes the construction of a shopping center in Bratislava and of the biggest casino in central Europe. Bratislava authorities are however against it.

As Ihned.cz reported, the project Metropolis should be built near the biggest housing estate in the capital, which is also not far from Austrian and Hungarian borders. **The project includes not only the casino but also an aqua park, conference center, three luxury hotels as well as a golf course and should be finished within 5 years.**

Supporting the project the Slovak finance minister Ján Počiatek pushed through various investment incentives for the project including tax reductions from 28 per cent to only 7 per cent. He also promoted the new gambling law, which was recently enacted. The expectations are that the state budget could gain €40 to 50 million a year from Metropolis.

The € 1.5 billion project was supposed to be launched this year by the TriGranit Development Corporation. Nevertheless, Bratislava authorities have thwarted the plans. The mayor of the city Andrej Ďurkovský stated that they support the project but without the casino. **They fear the casino would create numerous problems including an increase in criminality.**

Also the former Minister of Justice Daniel Lipšic criticizes the new gambling law. According to him social costs will increase as will the criminality and organized crime. Among the greatest threats connected with gambling and the new project are according to him higher drug consumption, prostitution and other socially negative issues.

The main investor, Harrah's, however stated that they will not launch the project if it does not include the casino. The future of the gambling industry as well as the whole project in Slovakia is thus uncertain.

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