

How PAF Troubles the Finnish Gaming Policy?

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Abstract

Paf is licensed by the provincial government to organize gaming on the Åland islands, onboard ships, on the Internet and via mobile phones. Authorities from Finland have contested their gaming monopoly, but a decision by the Supreme Court (2000/48) in 2001 gave Åland right in issuing Paf an Internet gaming license in 1997.

Paf had, however, also marketed their gaming site in Finland, which resulted in a prosecution of Paf in 2001. The Supreme Court ruled (2005:27) in February 2005 that Paf's Internet gaming operation had been in breach of the Finnish Lottery Act.

Since then the Finnish Ministry of the Interior has reported Paf to the police, and in January 2009 the Prosecutor General deemed PAF's Internet gaming operations illegal, but decided not to prosecute and waived the charges.

To further complicate the issue, a commission ordered by the Åland government suggested in May 2008 that Paf's monopoly should be abolished, and instead a license system should be established, opening the market for foreign operators. The suggestions made by the commission raise further "bad blood" between Finland and Åland, and if implemented also gives new ammunition to the EU Commission to question the gaming monopoly system in Finland.

Author Bio

Thomas Karlsson works as a researcher at the Department of Alcohol, Drugs and Addiction at the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), Helsinki, Finland. He has been active in the field of alcohol research since 1995, and has worked for the Åland Islands Government and Administrative Board, as well as a research assistant and researcher at the Åbo Akademi University. Prior to his current employment, Karlsson worked as Project Manager at the Nordic Council for Alcohol and Drug Research (NAD) (1998–2000).

Karlsson has been involved in many international comparative research projects, for instance in the European Comparative Alcohol Study (ECAS), the Bridging the Gap -study, led by Eurocare as well as the ongoing AMPHORA and SMART projects, that both are funded by the EU. At THL, Karlsson has mainly devoted his time to comparative alcohol policy research, and is currently also chairing the Editorial Board of the scientific journal Nordic Studies of Alcohol and Drugs (NAT).