

WALKING THE TALK: INVESTING IN SUSTAINABILITY

Romana Girandon,
EL President and CEO of Loterija Slovenije

Paul Jason: There is a lot of talk about social responsibility and being good corporate citizens. As EL's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Programme demonstrates, you're not just talking about it. Is it hard to get genuine buy-in and action when it comes to fulfilling our environmental and social responsibilities?

Romana Girandon: I believe, for most members of The European Lotteries (EL), deciding for a real 'buy-in' and action on environmental and societal responsibility hasn't been very difficult. We are in a specific industry that was historically developed in Europe to serve the public good. That's the reason why most of us were founded decades or even centuries ago. Social responsibility isn't a PR stunt or a marketing tool for us; it's our actual purpose. We exist to generate funds for the most vulnerable parts of our societies, which only makes sense if we fulfill it in a way that minimizes harm as much as possible.

This commitment is also why EL members are voluntarily joining our Environmental Initiative and contribute to its continuous improvement. Alongside the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Programme you mentioned, we also offer an initiative encouraging lotteries to use only responsibly harvested (FSC or similarly certified) paper. Although our Responsible Gaming Standards are mandatory, our environmental initiatives are voluntary. Yet, 50 percent of EL members have already joined, which I believe speaks about our commitment to the sustainable lottery model for itself.

I think everyone can appreciate the long-term ROI for a widespread commitment to sustainability and CSR. Is there a short-term ROI for committing resources right now?

R. Girandon: For lotteries, the most compelling motivation lies in championing the broader societal benefits of our model. We



must seize new opportunities to prove that we deliver far greater value to society – across all game verticals – than any other model. The environment is yet another chance for us to demonstrate this impact.

Moreover, younger generations, whom we especially want to engage as players, increasingly expect brands to actively care about the society they operate in – not just provide products. This is particularly true for activities like ours, which lack direct practical value and aren't essential to daily life. While faster, higher-risk games are on the rise, there's also a growing group motivated by the positive impact of their play. In Slovenia, our efforts to shape and communicate the purpose behind our games are paying off - recent research shows that a significant segment of players is now driven by a strong, altruistic motivation. This is crucial, as it shows that our work is not only socially responsible but also essential for building meaningful connections with players and solidifying our existence and market position.

More and more businesses are incorporating sustainable practices into their operations. If you could envision the ideal future for the lottery sector in terms of environmental sustainability, what would it look like?

R. Girandon: It wouldn't be far from what I believe is already happening. The first step is that everyone must be transparent. At EL, we advocate for objective KPIs that can be verified and compared across different

operators of games of chance. This will help eliminate green- or other kinds of washing and make it harder for those unwilling to truly invest in sustainable practices to hide behind vague promises. This also applies to misleading responsible gaming practices. Unfortunately, many businesses still try to create confusion by saying one thing and doing another, which makes it difficult for regulators and stakeholders to assess their true impact on public health, equality, the environment, and more.

Once transparency with clear KPIs is in place, it will be easier for our stakeholders - such as customers, regulators, states and courts - to distinguish between those who genuinely contribute to society and those who exploit people and the environment they operate in. From there, it will only be a matter of time before players and regulators demand that you either operate sustainably and benefit the society, or not operate at all.

The EL Environmental Initiative is just part of a larger sustainability project for the Association. What do you see as the next sustainability challenge for EL members to tackle?

R. Girandon: The biggest challenge I see is how to effectively become a trusted benchmark for European institutions, helping politicians and regulators recognize the value of the lottery model and the impact of games of chance. This is primarily a challenge of measuring, demonstrating, comparing and communicating our efforts while raising stakeholder awareness both

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internationally and locally. We need to prevent those who either don't understand or don't care about the long-term importance of sustainability in games of chance from clouding the issue and continuing harmful practices for short-term profit.

If our companies are to have a sustainable future, we must act accordingly. While it is possible to generate significant short-term profits at the expense of society, such practices ultimately threaten to undermine not only lotteries but the entire games of chance industry in Europe.

EL's extensive educational programme promotes best practices and knowledge sharing. How is it evolving with the times and helping members integrate sustainability more deeply into their operations?

R. Girandon: In addition to the well-known EL seminars - many organized in partnership with WLA and our valued level 1, 2, and 3 partners – we've developed a comprehensive set of initiatives and deliverables to help EL members embed sustainability into their operations.

With the EL Manifesto, we identified eight critical regulatory topics to safeguard the lottery model. EL is using it to engage with the European Institutions and encouraging members to do the same with national regulators and governments. We are continuing to support independent academic studies on the social value of lotteries,

sports betting and other games of chance across several European countries.

Our newly upgraded EL Sustainability Guidelines are now publicly available, providing members and any other interested parties with straightforward guidance on key sustainability topics. To strengthen the protection of minors, we've issued a call to the new European Commission. Additionally, the fifth class of the EL WILL - Women's Initiative in Lottery Leadership has launched, featuring 12 new mentorship duos, including mentors and mentees from our partners. And, in collaboration with members with a strong lottery heritage, we are working to raise awareness and pursue UNESCO World Heritage recognition for the lottery model.

As the year is coming to a close, we are looking ahead to 2025. Are you excited to go to Barcelona for the big EL/WLA Marketing Seminar in January?

R. Girandon: It will be interesting to see how the transition from London to Barcelona unfolds. Changes like this offer an opportunity to refresh the old Marketing seminar, both in format and content. I'm looking forward to seeing how it turns out.

At the same time, I cannot overlook the fact that Barcelona is also a beautiful city in Spain that is currently facing some of the worst floods in recorded history. I'm

following the news with great sadness and concern, with my thoughts being with the people of Valencia during this difficult time. Across Europe, we've been witnessing extreme weather events almost every month - recently in Italy, Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany, Croatia, Poland, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, and now Spain. Millions have been affected, with lives lost and property damage in the billions. It's clear that the climate is changing and we all have a role to play in addressing it.

Susan and I are looking forward to the EL Congress next year in Bern. It's a little early, but is there anything you can tell us about it preliminarily?

R. Girandon: First, after missing you in Paris, I look forward to seeing you and Susan in Barcelona and Bern. Congratulations to you both on your well-deserved induction into the Lottery Industry Hall of Fame.

At the EL Congress in Bern, Switzerland, next September, we'll share some of the most interesting outcomes of our initiatives, including those I've just mentioned. While some of our efforts are still evolving and results may vary, we are fully committed to demonstrating that the societal value of the lottery model - across all game verticals – stands as the best there is. ■

EL initiatives drive innovation for far-reaching positive social impact



**THE EUROPEAN
LOTTERIES**
FOR THE BENEFIT OF SOCIETY

The European Lotteries: Ahead of the Game with Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Programme

The European Lotteries (EL) reaffirms its position as a sectoral leader in sustainability with a new commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across its members' operations. Announced on Sept 26, 2024 during the EL/WLA Sustainability and Responsible Gaming Seminar in Dublin, this initiative reflects EL's continued dedication to driving environmental responsibility within the lottery sector.

Building on the success of earlier projects, the next focus will be on actively decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, setting measurable targets and adopting sustainable practices by EL's members to combat climate change. By encouraging its members to lower their carbon footprint, EL is setting a clear example to the sector that environmental change is both achievable and essential. This also

further contributes to national lotteries' positive social impact on society.

In parallel, EL unveiled updated Sustainability Guidelines, which are now again fully aligned with global sustainability standards. They provide a comprehensive roadmap for EL members to further integrate sustainability into all aspects of their operations, from responsible supply chains to player protection and community engagement.

"The new commitment demonstrates our proactive approach to addressing climate change, while the updated guidelines ensure that EL members remain at the forefront of environmental and social responsibility," says **Romana Girandon, EL President**. EL's leadership in sustainability is further evidenced by its continuous efforts to influence policy debates, raise awareness and drive innovation for far reaching positive social impact. ■