

# IMGL Annual Gaming Industry Event

2 February 2018

Industrieele Groote Club

Dam 27, Amsterdam

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, I would like to talk to you about NOTHING.  
That may come as a surprise, because when one is invited as a speaker it's common to talk about something.  
But today it's really about NOTHING.

Maybe you guess that, with this introduction, I will speak about KOA; the proposed bill for gambling online. But no. That subject will be covered by Dennis van Breemen, of the Ministry of Justice and Security.

Ladies and gentlemen, NOTHING is what you and I need to aim for when it comes to children. We all know that children up to 18 are not allowed to gamble. But still they do.

Therefore, I want to give this message: In 2018, the Netherlands Gaming Authority will focus on making sure that children do not gamble. I want it to be your priority too. Because, negative effects of gambling for children are huge.

In order to illustrate the impact of gambling to children, I would like to introduce you to Mr. Paul Buck.

I don't know him personally, but his story really touched me<sup>1</sup>.

He says:

"It took me one bet in October 1994 to turn me from someone who had no interest in gambling, to somebody who didn't go without a bet for 17 years. I spent millions, and attempted to hang myself. I

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<sup>1</sup> <http://news.trust.org/item/20171211080930-ekbui/>

was convicted to nearly three years in jail, for stealing hundreds of thousands of Pounds of my employer."

He describes how he became a problem gambler. In his case, it all started as a minor in college, after joining a football team full of gamblers.

"Prevention is better than cure", Paul Buck says. "It's a long way back if you are suicidal or have ended up in prison."

And about children he says: "We have our first tech-savvy generation, who has been subject to gambling ads and gaming since the age of seven. It's a ticking time bomb that's ready to go off."

It's important to keep story's like this in mind. Paul Buck's life certainly would have been different when not having had the opportunity to gamble as a child.

Paul Buck is now a gambling awareness trainer.

Ladies and gentlemen,

So why the urgency? What's the rush? Is the story of Paul Buck not just a sad exception from abroad? Aren't we doing enough in the Netherlands, to keep children away from gambling?

To answer those questions, let me give you some figures from research done in the Netherlands amongst children of 16 and 17 year old:

- 5% buy lottery tickets
- 10% buy tickets of instant lottery
- 12% of them play sports betting
- 12% play slot machines

I know that you don't target on children on purpose.

But still we found online advertising for licensed gambling on websites that specifically target at children.

And in many cases, our inspectors could easily get around restrictive measures of licensed offerings. And if *they* can do it, a thrill seeking, creative and technology wise child will also be able to do so.

As a mother, I know that children are “technology wise”. My own children are experts with regard to smartphones, tablets and notebooks. I am sure your children are experts as well.

That wisdom, and the fact that teenagers are easily drawn into gambling, lead to the situation that – when given the opportunity - minors do gamble.

Teenagers gamble, because they find it hard to withstand temptation. They feel social pressure from friends. They have a risk appetite. They take debts lightly.

I do recognise that several operators are heading in the right direction with regard to NOTHING.

But more needs to be done to prevent children from gambling: Make it your priority, whether you are the operator of slot machines, of lotteries or sports betting:

- Improve the measures you already take to exclude children.
- Expand your measures;
- Implement existing measures better.
- Implement the best IT applications for ID-checks;
- Increase the security to prevent minors to enter brick and mortar gambling premises;
- Make sure your advertising does not target the youth;
- Send out the message that gambling is not a normal activity for children (Play responsible 18+, “Speel bewust 18+”).

Ladies and gentlemen,

Across the economy, companies are becoming increasingly focussed on their wider responsibilities to their customers, and regulators are helping to shape this:

- In financial services, you see that bank employees take an oath, swearing that consumer interests are at the centre of their activities. It took the financial crisis of 2008 and banks becoming one of the least trusted industries, to prompt any real action in that sector.

- Look also at the insurance industry that supports consumers to get rid of rampant insurances (“woekerpolis”), in order to recover from that scandal.

The message from these examples is clear: don't wait for a crisis! Act now and demonstrate that your interest in the needs of consumers is genuine.

Society gave us the responsibility to keep children away from gambling. The law is very clear about that.

The negative effects of gambling to children are huge. Gambling is addictive and disruptive and has:

- negative health consequences (brain development)
- negative financial consequences (money shortage - Nibud);
- negative social consequences (school dropout);
- negative societal consequences (treatment costs, criminality)

And that is why I stress NOTHING today. Turning the percentages to zero (0%). Not one opportunity for children to gamble.

12% does not look good. Not for the industry. Not for NGA. It is a problem we share.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I invite you all to join me in increasing our efforts to achieving that. As we are on two sides of the same medal, we will only succeed if our efforts becomes a true common effort. That means that we should sharpen each other in a continuous dialogue.

1. On our side, as a first step, the Netherlands Gaming Authority is looking at the blurring lines between gaming and gambling. Increasingly, we see elements of gambling in online games. And we see that children switch from gaming to gambling. We are investigating whether those offerings are allowed within the current gambling law. And we are studying on the risks of those games.

2. The Gaming Authority will invest in informing minors, parents and educators better about the risks of gambling. We especially try to reach out to children who gamble at illegal operators.
3. And, on our side of the medal: KOA, the proposed bill for gambling online, will contribute to NOTHING by introducing stern demands on ID-checks.

I can imagine, as a parallel step, that the industry informs us about the outcome of the efforts *you* have taken to keep minors away from gambling.

If the efforts are deemed sufficient, we will *all* have a great opportunity for PR. If that's not quite the case, we will suggest improvements. Nobody wants legal procedures and media attention stemming from insufficient protection of minors.

When the improvements do not occur, we will use that as an aggravating circumstance when we reach the phase of enforcement of the law.

In this way we will have a common effort of the regulator and the industry. I am sure that we are able to prevent situations in which children are involved.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me end my speech with some summery remarks.

I would like you to take home the message that:

- children (your sons and daughters!) should not be given the opportunity to gamble;
- The Netherlands Gaming Authority will work on this together with you. We will inform you about best practises. We will reach out to children who gamble at illegal operators;
- We ask you to raise your ambitions. Step up the pace of change. Improve the measures you already take to exclude children. And expand your measures. Make it your priority.

Let's work together on realising NOTHING.

“NOTHING will happen if we try.” Thank you.