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The ECA's European Dealer Championship crowns its champion in Brussels

The European Casino Association's European Dealer Champion 2023 has been crowned at a spectacular finals event staged at the Grand Casino Brussels: VIAGE. Two days of intense competition, starting on June 13, saw 36 participants from 20 different European countries showcase the industry's finest talent in the 'art of dealing' in the Capital of Europe. Proving their skill across all disciplines, Alessandro Mesina from UK's, Les Ambassadeurs, beat William Gosnold from UK's Metropolitan Gaming and Katarzyna Bielawska from Sweden's Casino Cosmopol, into second and third place, to win a thrilling final to rightfully be named this year's European Dealer Champion.

The 15th edition of the ECA's European Dealer Championship took place the Grand Casino Brussels VIAGE, the largest entertainment space in Belgium's capital, situated at the heart of the Capital of Europe. The 2023 event welcomed a record number of participants, jury members and a crowd of hundreds of spectators who witnessed Europe's finest dealers in action. With the number of participants, countries and spectators growing every year, this year's event was among the largest Championships ever organised by the ECA and was universally proclaimed as one of the best yet staged.

Reflecting on his performance, the winner Alessandro Mesina stated: "I can't explain how happy and excited I am after winning this championship. It was my first time participating in both the UK Dealer Championship and the European Dealer Championship, and to win them both is an ecstatic feeling - adrenaline at 1,000 per cent, constant suspense, I slept probably three hours in the last four days, but it was all worth it!"

In addition to the main prize, in which participants had to prove their talents in the traditional and most popular casino games of American Roulette and Black Jack, a variety of Skill Challenges focused upon special disciplines to find croupiers that have mastered chipping, card handling, cutting chips, pushing stacks and mathematics. The following winners showed their skills in these specialty events:



Best in Pushing Stacks: William Gosnold, UK, Metropolitan Gaming
Best Chipper: Antonis Spyrou, Cyprus, City of Dreams Mediterranean
Best Cutting Chips: William Gosnold, UK, Metropolitan Gaming
Best Card Handler: Fernando Ivanoff Gomes, Finland, Veikkaus
Best Mathematician: Agata Litwinienko, Poland, Casino Poland

The prizes for this year's event were sponsored by leading industry suppliers. The second runner-up prize was sponsored by CLS Casino Locking Systems. The runner-up prize was sponsored by TCS John Huxley, and the main prize for the EDC champion 2023 was sponsored by Light & Wonder. This year's Skill Challenge prizes were sponsored by Matsui Gaming, Cammegh and Marton Gaming.

The ECA Dealer Championship is the longest-running competition of its kind in Europe, with croupiers chosen at the national level to compete in a knock-out tournament that involves technical skill, control of the game, hospitality and nerves of steel. Since its inaugural event in 2007, the European Dealer Championship has visited 14 countries and welcomed almost 500 contestants and 2,500 spectators from across Europe and beyond. This year's event was originally planned to take place in Cyprus, at the City of Dreams: Mediterranean, but delays in the completion of the project meant that Grand Casino Brussels VIAGE stepped in as a stunning replacement venue. The ECA would like to thank VIAGE CEO Mark Banks and Grand Casino Brussels VIAGE casino management team, Michelle Cummins, Siham Makrache and Danny Kaljee for their time, energy and help staging the competition at such short notice.

Mark Banks, CEO VIAGE, commented: "It has been a great pleasure to host such elite dealer talent from so many European land-based casinos here in Brussels. The European Dealer Championship is both a showcase for the extraordinary talent of so many dealers from so many countries in Europe, and an amazing meeting point for the land-based casino sector to celebrate the distinct and unparalleled entertainment experiences we provide as an industry to our valued guests. The competition was intense, thrilling and most importantly, fun. I congratulate all participants for



making the competition such an enjoyable two days here in Brussels. In my view, every dealer taking part in this year's European Dealer Championship is a winner.”

“Judging the competition increases in difficulty each and every year as the talent within our casino community also expands, beyond all expectations, each and every year. It has been a pleasure to witness the skill and determination of all the dealers taking part in this year's competition. Every dealer brought their “A” game to EDC 2023, with only the slimmest of margins separating the participants, all of whom acquitted themselves with the same great composure and professionalism that they show every day in their home country casinos. Congratulations to the winners and my thanks to all the competitors for making this such an incredible and memorable tournament, stated Jaana Ruokamo, EDC 2023 Tournament Director and Chain Operations Manager at Finland's Veikkaus Oy.

“I would like to thank all the participants at this year's event, for their dedication and ongoing commitment to upholding the finest standards the casino industry has to offer. I'd also like to give a special mention to the esteemed panel of jurors, experienced professionals that play a vital role in evaluating the contestants, and who make this event such celebration of skill and talent. And finally, to our host, Grand Casino Brussels VIAGE which is part of the Casinos Austria international group, for embracing the spirit of this competition and providing the perfect backdrop to this year's event,” commented ECA Chairman, Erwin van Lambaart. “The European Dealer Championship continues to serve as a platform for broadcasting the fact that our industry fosters the finest talent, builds lasting connections, and inspired future generations of professionals to dream big on the greatest of stages, the gaming floors of our European casino members. Every year the EDC reveals the incredible diversity of talent nurtured by the land-based gaming industry, which employs over 60,000 people in Europe. Congratulations to Alessandro Mesina for rising to the top of an outstanding field of competitors.”

The ECA is grateful to the sponsors of the EDC 2023: Abbiati Casino Equipment, AGEM, Aristocrat Gaming, Cammegh, Casino Helsinki & Tampere, Clarion Events, Casino Locking Systems, CTC Holdings, Dallmeier, Galaxy Gaming, Hippodrome Casino, Holland Casino, ICSE, IGT, Le Casino Monte-



Carlo, Light & Wonder, Marton Gaming, Matsui Europe, Smart Rota, Tangam Systems, TCS John Huxley, JD Supplies and Grand Casino Brussels VIAGE.

The European Dealer Championship will return in 2024 at Casino Venlo hosted by Holland Casino.

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About the EDC

The European Dealer Championship (EDC) is the long-running competition organised by the ECA that takes place yearly at an ECA member casino. Croupiers chosen at national level compete against each other in a competition that involves technical skill, control of the game and hospitality. Also taking place are competitions (Skill Challenges) to find the best chipper, best card handler, best cutting chips, best pushing stacks and best mathematician.

About the ECA

The European Casino Association (ECA) represents licensed land-based casinos in Europe, with 29 members and over 60,000 direct employees supporting local economies across Europe. It has members from nearly all EU Member States, as well as non-EU countries. The primary purpose and objective of the ECA are to address and promote issues related to landbased and online casinos, fight illegal gambling and promote the positive contribution of the industry.

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