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# A giant casino to be built by the airport. On a town hall member's property.

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Photo: Tuchoměřice newspaper

Visualization of the planned Grand Arena casino in the cadastre of Tuchoměřice near Prague.

Mysterious investors promise that tens of millions of crowns will flow into the municipal budget thanks to a casino. But only on the condition that the currently planned taxation of gambling is not passed. In Tuchomerice near Prague, the locals are waiting for a referendum.

In the village of Tuchoměřice, near Prague's Václav Havel Airport, a giant casino with slot machines is planned to be built. Opponents demand that the municipality ban gambling on its territory. The decision is to be made in the referendum that the town hall announced for September 15.

In the village with less than 1,700 inhabitants, two casinos could be built in the coming years: the first of them as a separate building called Grand Arena; in addition to

gambling, the plan is to build a hotel and an MMA arena. The second casino with slot machines should be created in the premises of the already operating shopping center POP Airport.

At least that's how it is described in the promotional materials, which the citizens of Tuchoměřice have been receiving in their mailboxes for several months as part of the local town hall newsletter, where investors have paid for advertising. The representatives of the Tuchoměřice town hall are, when it comes to the giant casino on the territory of the municipality, hesitant to comment.

First and foremost it is Martin Růžička, a town hall member and the chair of the financial committee, on whose land the giant casino called Grand Arena is to be built. When asked by the editorial staff of Seznam Zprávy [Seznam News] with whom he is negotiating regarding the sale of his land, Růžička simply said, "I will not comment."

Růžička declared to the other representatives a conflict of interest when deciding on matters related to the construction. And according to him, that solves it. "Yes, I declared a conflict of interest. That's all I would say about it," Růžička added.

And the mayor Pavel Cihlář is not much more willing to speak. "I am sorry,, but I don't want to comment. The decision will be made in a referendum," he told Seznam Zprávy. How does he himself view the construction of the casino? "I have no opinion on that," the mayor replied.

Other members of the nine-member council express themselves similarly. "After considering all aspects, the council decided to give all the citizens of the municipality the opportunity to comment on the issue in a referendum," said the chair of the social commission, Karel Novák.

So in mid-September, the locals will answer two questions: Do you agree that the municipality should allow the operation of gambling games on the two mentioned plots? And do you agree that the municipality should establish a municipal police in such a case?

To clarify, it is not necessary to obtain a permit from the municipality to operate gambling activities, the Ministry of Finance is responsible for that. However, a municipality can use a decree to limit or completely prohibit gambling on its territory.

**The lobbyist promised tens of millions. The company is washing their hands of him**

The residents of Tuchoměřice learned about the plan to build casinos from advertising leaflets inserted in the local town hall newsletter. In the paid advertisement, under the heading "Who are we?", two companies are presented - European Data Project, which is the Czech subsidiary of the giant multinational gambling company Novomatic, and then the company TLM. According to the documents in the register, it is also connected to the company Novomatic, through the company GPC Win.

In June, two representatives of gambling companies arrived at the meeting of the local council, where they tried to persuade nine local representatives and several interested members of the public of the benefits of hard gambling for their community.

The former director of Fortuna Jiří Bunda presented the plan for the construction of the Grand Arena on behalf of GPC Win. Pavel Žák then lobbied for a casino in a shopping center on behalf of Bonver Win.

They promised tens of millions to the Tuchoměřice budget, which the state should pay as part of the redistribution of gambling taxes. According to their calculations, it could be approximately 60 to 90 million CZK, depending on how the rules for gambling taxation are changed within the so-called consolidation package [which is being discussed right now]. Compared to Tuchoměřice's 50 million budget, it would be a huge amount, the lobbyists promised.

In order for such a vision to come true, one of the largest casinos in the Czech Republic would have to be built in Tuchoměřice. And the distribution of gambling taxes would have to continue in the coming years according to the current pattern, as requested by gambling companies.

#### **How gambling money is divided [information as of 24 August 2023]**

- Gambling companies pay a tax of 35% on profits from technical games and lotteries, mainly from slot machines [lit. "winning" machines].
- The Ministry of Finance distributes 65% of this money to municipalities and 35% to the state.
- Municipalities receive a share of the collected money according to how many machines are registered by the Ministry of Finance in their territory. It doesn't matter whether the machines are being used by players.
- Paradoxically, the same rules also apply to money from online gambling - they are divided according to the number of registered "boxes". The government wants to change that as part of the consolidation package and take money from online gambling from municipalities.

At the occasion of that meeting, Mr. Bunda boasted to Tuchoměřice representatives about his meeting with the Minister of Finance Zbyňek Stanjura. He claimed that when meeting Mr Stanjura, a promise was made that the ministry would leave a significant portion of the money from gambling to the municipalities.

Opponents of gambling are trying to change this system so that municipalities are not financially motivated to have as many slot machines as possible on their territory. However, the ministry surprisingly came to the aid of gambling companies and in the latest version of the amendment left most of the taxes on technical gambling to the municipalities.

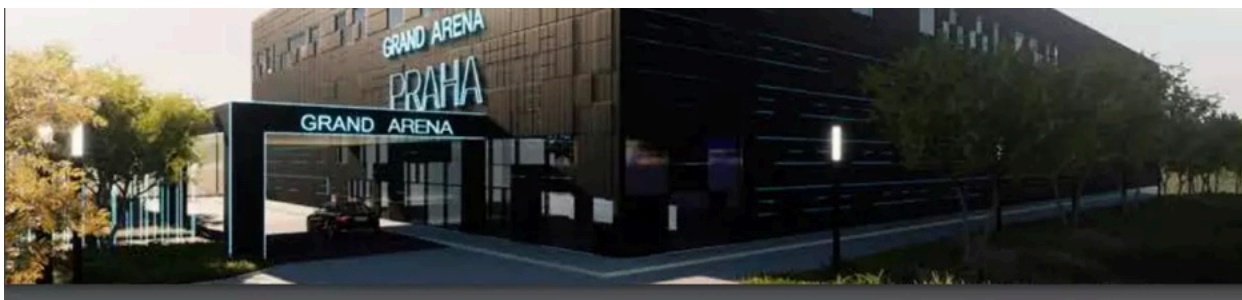
"It was promised that it (restricting gambling revenue for municipalities) was a mistake and that there would be an adjustment when online would be taken out of it, but 65% of the gambling tax from the offline technical game would still go to the municipalities," Mr Bunda described to Seznam Zprávy what was allegedly said his meeting with Mr Stanjura at the end of June.

But the ministry distanced itself from the meeting with Bunda. "After checking the minister's calendar and the attendance records from the relevant meetings, we rule out that the minister attended any meeting in the presence of Mr. Bunda at any time this year. At the same time, we rule out that the minister was the author of the statement that Mr. Bunda attributes to him," ministry spokesman Filip Běhal responded to Seznam Zpráv's inquiry in June.

And the European Data Project subsequently issued a statement in which it also gives up on Jiří Bunda. At the same time, the company admits that they are interested in the operation of Grand Arena.

"None of the Novomatic group companies is an investor in the upcoming project and did not send any representatives to the council meeting. If the construction of a casino building goes ahead, the company Paradise Casino Admiral, a.s. (a subsidiary of the European Data Project, also belonging to the Novomatic group, editor's note) is ready to negotiate with the developer about the operation of the casino, but is not participating in the said project in the preparatory stages," the company stated on its website.

The editors [of Seznam Zprávy] tried to contact the company. The email address given as their contact for the media, however, does not work.



GRAND

## KDO JSME?

### EUROPEAN DATA PROJECT s.r.o.

člen skupiny NOVOMATIC

**NOVOMATIC GROUP**  
rodinná firma  
majitel profesor Johann Graf  
24 000 zaměstnanců  
zastoupena v 50 zemích světa  
2,8 miliardy EUR - tržby za rok 2022  
2 000 luxusních kasin po celém světě

Skupina NOVOMATIC Group – jeden z hlavních tvůrců herního a zábavního průmyslu na celém světě – vstoupila na český trh již v roce 1989, kdy byly položeny základy budoucího vedoucího postavení společnosti European Data Project s.r.o. v herním a zábavním průmyslu České republiky.

V roce 1998 byl v Komořanech u Vyškova otevřen moderní závod, kde se prováděla finální kompletace výrobků a podzim roku 2002 otevřen v Rousínově další provoz. Do dnešní doby se firma European Data Project s.r.o. rozrostla v rozsáhlý průmyslový podnik, který disponuje výrobní plochou 120 000 m<sup>2</sup> a má více než 1000 zaměstnanců. Ve spolupráci se sesterskou společností NOVOMATIC AG z Rakouska zabezpečuje vývoj a výrobu více než 45 000 výherních přístrojů a herních systémů, které vyváží do celého světa. Prostřednictvím svých dceřiných společností Paradise Casino Admiral, a.s., American Game s.r.o., ADMIRAL GLOBAL BETTING a.s. a EVOL a.s. je společnost European Data Project s.r.o. významným způsobem zastoupena i na kasinovém a herním trhu České republiky. Tato skupina firem v současnosti provozuje ve více než 100 kasinech přibližně 2500 herních míst u výherních hracích přístrojů a herních systémů a nabízí dalších cca 500 herních míst u stolů s atraktivní živou hrou. Tímto způsobem navíc nalézá denně práci dalších více než 700 zaměstnanců v celé České republice.

Firma European Data Project s.r.o. je významně zastoupena i na dalších evropských trzích, především na Slovensku prostřednictvím svých dcer Unifin s.r.o., CBG s.r.o., EWS s.r.o. a STARDUST s.r.o. Takto zaměstnává dalších 1000 lidí.

In advertisements [published in the Tuchoměřice newsletter] European Data Project from Novomatic group is presented as the investor.

Jiří Bunde. Přijezdouva trasa nevede SAMZ obec a navíc jde o luxusní podnik, kde bude obecně spíše méně bohatších klientů.

Odhadem cca 50-70 % klientů budou zahraniční hosté, kteří využijí nedalekého letiště.

## PROČ CHTÍT ARÉNU?

### PŘÍNOS PRO OBEC – CCA 100 MILIONŮ KČ ROČNĚ

- ✓ Na základě čísel z roku 2022 by obec inkasovala od státu „příspěvek z hazardní daně“ cca 94 milionů Kč
- ✓ Další finanční příspěvky - z živé hry a díky sídlu společnosti v obci
- ✓ Podpora místních aktivit ve výši minimálně 1 mil. Kč za rok

### PŘÍNOS PRO OBČANY – DVOJNÁSOBNÉ MZDY

- ✓ V arénách bývají minimálně dvojnásobné mzdy než v jiných obchodních provozech
- ✓ Nabídka pracovních příležitostí pro cca 500 zaměstnanců – úplné i částečné úvazky

## CHCEME BÝT DLOUHODOBÝM A SKUTEČNÝM PARTNEREM OBCE.

TAK JAKO VŠUDE,  
KDE PODNIKÁME!



kostelem či školou

- ✓ každý návštěvník arény, musí projít registrací (žádné anonymní hrani), kde uvede údaje dle zákona a je u něj provedena AML identifikace – důvodem je předcházení možného „praní špinavých peněz“
- ✓ návštěvník si musí stanovit limity hry – výše sázek za den, výšek sázek za měsíc, výše prohry, ...
- ✓ společnost musí mít systém vnitřních zásad na odhalování praní špinavých peněz a musí aktivně spolupracovat s FAÚ (každý provozovatel je z hlediska AML zákona osobou povinnou)
- ✓ existuje tzv. rejstřík vyloučených osob (Rejstřík vyloučených osob Ministerstva financí ČR (mfcr.cz)), který neumožní vstup lidem „na dávkách“

V žádné lokalitě, kde provozujeme své podniky, nedošlo k nárůstu negativních jevů. Naopak ve všech lokalitách došlo ke zkulturnění a zpříjemnění poskytovaných služeb, ke zvýšení atraktivity lokality pro návštěvníky a naskytlly se i nové možnosti pro podnikatele.

Věříme, že vás náš projekt zaujal a těšíme se na spolupráci!

Jiří Bunda  
generální ředitel GPC WIN a.s. a zástupce investorů

In advertisements [published in the Tuchoměřice newsletter] Jiří Bunda is signed as the representative of the investor.

In the advertising materials for the Grand Arena project, Bunda is signed as the "general director of GPC WIN a.s. and investor's representative".

After the company distanced itself from him, the editors [of Seznam Zprávy] contacted Jiří Bunda again. "I represented Mr. Jiří Bunda, no one else. Neither of these companies is an investor. I don't want you to contact me anymore," Bunda replied.

## A professor-butcher and a family business with 24,000 employees

A paid advertisement in the Tuchoměřice newsletter presents the multinational company Novomatic Group as the investor. However, it presents the company as a "family business", whose owner is "Professor Graf".

In reality the company is a giant multinational company based in Vienna, founded by trained butcher Johann Graf. In the 1970s, he started importing gaming machines to

Austria, and in 1980 he founded a company for their production. Hand in hand with this, the company also started to operate its own casinos and gambling places. Over time, online gambling has also been added, from which it now accounts for approximately half of its revenue.

The company is represented in more than fifty countries, from the USA to Europe and Russia to Australia. Forbes magazine estimates Graf's assets to be worth \$7.2 billion (158 billion CZK).

But the company Novomatic is also accompanied by huge scandals. Austria's Der Standard reported in February this year about a police intervention directly at the company's headquarters. Austrian investigators have suspected the company of avoiding paying taxes for several years. It paid out 130 million euros in "donations" to its employees and board members, writes Der Standard. According to the investigators, however, it was actually a payment that the company should have taxed.

#### **The Ibiza affair and other Novomatic cases**

- In 2009, several ministers in Poland resigned because of their contact with Novomatic lobbyists. The government planned to increase gambling taxes to finance the 2012 European Football Championship.
- In 2014, investigators raided the offices of Novomatic and former director Franz Wohlfhart. They suspected him of bribing the finance minister. In 2017, this proceedings were stopped.
- In 2019, the so-called Ibiza Affair broke out, which led to the fall of the government of Sebastian Kurz. In a recording made in 2017, Christian Strache, the leader of Austria's Freedom Party (FPÖ), says that various people, including Novomatic, offered him money for his campaign. The company denied the claim.
- In 2014 in Italy, the company had to pay a fine of 47.5 million euros for circumventing the tax authority. In 2015, Austrian ORF television reported on a corruption investigation in connection with Novomatic's operations in Romania. And most recently, in 2021, the British subsidiary of Novomatic was fined 685 thousand pounds for money laundering.

The connection between GPC Win and Novomatic is obvious. Although GPC Win is a company with anonymous shares, it states on its website that in the fall of 2022 Novomatic became its half owner, which also corresponds to the documents in the register. And the beneficial ownership records show that GPC Win is owned by Johann Graf, the founder and owner of Novomatic.

## **Guaranteed costs and uncertain income, critics point out**

Ten residents of Tuchoměřice refuse to accept the fact that a giant casino with an unclear property structure should be built in their village.

"Gambling has a lot of negative social effects. It is not only about the players themselves, but also about their families. Research shows that problematic gamblers also drag their loved ones into their misery. We don't want the municipality to finance its activities with unethically obtained money, we'd rather wait for slower money from grants," says Karel Kreml, a member of Tuchoměřice proti hazardu, a Tuchoměřice anti-gambling initiative.

Opponents of gambling calculated that in a village with approximately 1,100 eligible voters, at least 400 people would need to come to the referendum and at least 280 would vote against gambling. So far, they have counted over 200 like-minded neighbors.

In addition to the ethical dimension, gambling does not even pay off financially for the village, opponents of gambling claim.

"Casino representatives do not guarantee any income for the municipality at all. They are using tax revenue from technical games as their argument, but at the moment the law is changing and so far it looks like the government will cut that revenue for municipalities in about half. It can be expected that in 10 years, for example, the situation will be completely different, because the state will be looking for money for the budget and will very likely reach for money from gambling. Building an arena, on the other hand, certainly means high costs on the part of the municipality for networking, lighting, a water treatment plant and the like," says Kreml.

After all, gambling companies themselves admit this. At least when they are lobbying for the preservation of the current model of gambling taxation, where a slight majority of the money collected from taxes goes to the budgets of some municipalities.

"The operation of a large casino may (at the same time) require the expansion or improvement of local infrastructure such as roads, parking lots, sewers and water systems. The municipality must invest in these infrastructural projects to ensure sufficient capacity and comfort for casino visitors," reads the already mentioned statement of the European Data Project.