



Effects of Covid-19 to people seeking help for problematic gambling - case Finland

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Gambling Clinic

- **Service entity** specialised in gambling related problems (also services related to digital gaming & excess use of internet)
- **Partnership agreement 2010-2014 (1st phase), Partnership Agreement 2015-2016 (2nd phase), Partnership Agreement 2017-2019 (3rd phase), Partnership Agreement 2020-2023 (4rd phase)**
 - Municipalities of Helsinki, Vantaa and Kauniainen, Socca – the Centre of Expertise on Social Welfare in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area
 - NGO's – the Finnish Blue Ribbon, A-clinic Foundation, Sosped Foundation
 - National Institute for Health and Welfare
- Wide range of services (local and nationwide services)
- All services free of charge, no referral needed
- Staff: 26 employees in 2022
- Funding from: Municipalities (Helsinki, Vantaa, Kauniainen), Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA), Ministry of Social Welfare and Health/ National Institution on Health and Welfare, Veikkaus Oy

PELUURI

Peluuri's helpline -support, counselling & information online

A-clinic foundation ja Finnish blue ribbon (NGO)

Funding Veikkaus Oy
950 000 €
11,5 employees

Nationwide, digital services online

RESTART (2019-2021)

Online program (8 weeks) for digital gamers

Finnish blue ribbon (NGO)
Funding: STEA
226.000 €
2,5 employees

DEVELOPMENT
COORDINATION
DATA COLLECTION
RESEARCH

Socca

Funding: THL/STM
300 000 €
3 employees

OUTPATIENT CARE

Individual-, couple-, family or group

Municipalities

Funding:

Helsinki 160.000 €

Vantaa: noin 80.000 €

Kauniainen: 3.200 €

3 employees

Local, face to face -services

TILTTI

Information and support for gambling related harms, peer and professional support, groups, low threshold walk-in,

Finnish blue ribbon (NGO)
Funding: STEA
355 000€
5,5 employees



In total there are 3000-4000 gamblers and close ones in Gambling Clinic services annually (Restart not included)



Outpatient

Peluuri 2021

- Helpline and chat
- Gamblers: contacts **1445**
- Close ones: contacts **553**
- Time to Fold –

care 2021

- Individual customers **153 (134)**
- Visits/contacts in total **679 (1458)**

Tiltti 2021 (2019)

- Visits in total **621 (1803)**
- New customers **65 (163)**
- Gamblers 40
- Close ones 14

Gambling in Finland

- In Finland the gambling is directed by the Finnish Lotteries Act. Gambling operator Veikkaus (since 1.1.2017) has exclusive rights to organize games on the continent of Finland. In the Åland Islands the gaming is operated by PAF
- The gambling profits (Veikkaus) are used for utilitarian purposes, in accordance with the Lotteries Act.
- In Finland both land-based and online gambling is widely available and Finnish people gamble a lot - 78% of Finns (15–74-years) had engaged in some kind of gambling over the previous 12 months *
- Latest prevalence rates with SOGS of population from 15 to 74 years (2019)*
 - Gambling on risk level (SOGS 1-2) 11 %
 - Problem gamblers (SOGS 3-4) 1,6 %
 - Gambling addiction (SOGS 5+) 1,4 %

* Salonen, A. et al. (2019): Suomalaisten rahapelaaminen 2019. Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare

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Caused by Covid-19

Influences directly to gambling

- Closing slot machines (Veikkaus)
- Closing gambling halls (Veikkaus)
- Opening slots and gambling halls (Veikkaus)
- Closing sport events/ narrowing down betting possibilities
- Lowering the loss limits (Veikkaus)

- Social isolation
- Economic and employment effect
- Emotional effects
- Narrowed possibilities to do things (hobbies etc.)
- Closing down some of the services

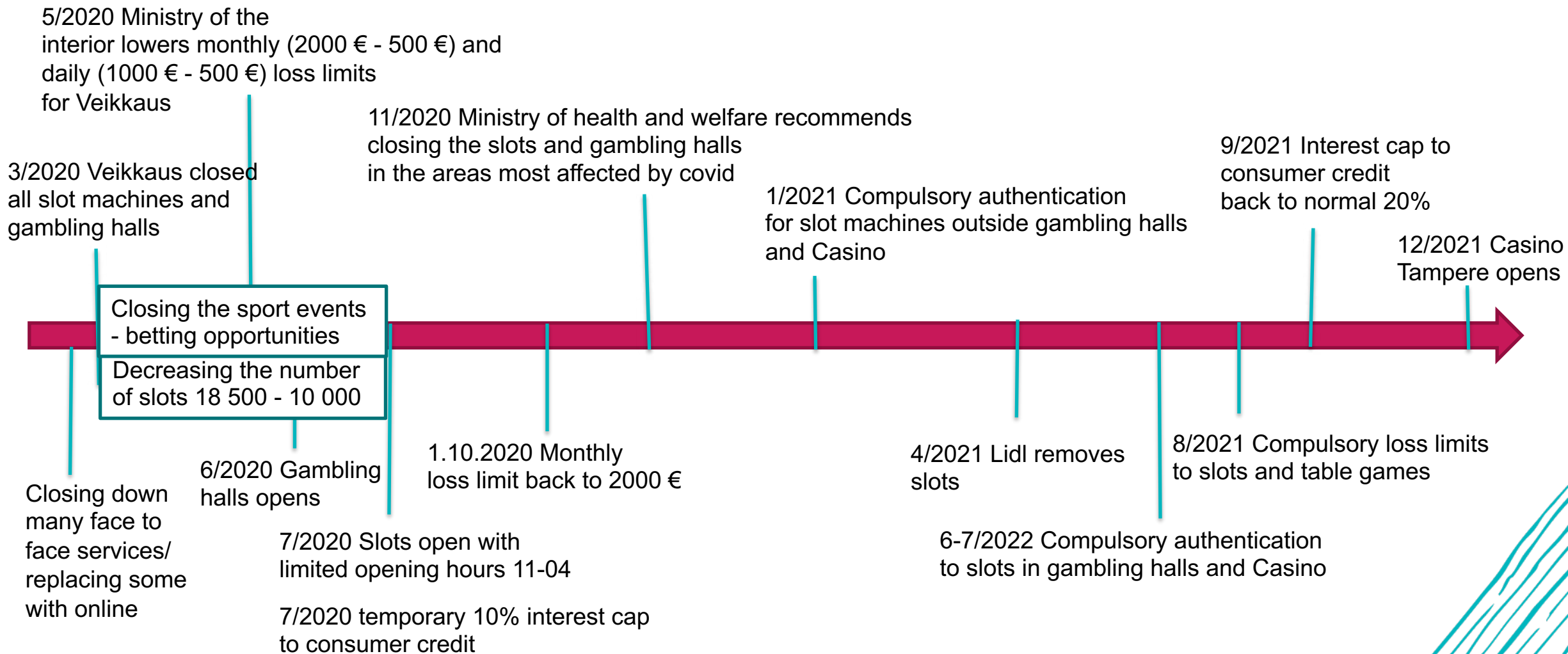
Influences indirectly to gambling

- Decreasing the amount of slots
- Compulsory authentication and loss limits (Veikkaus Oy)
- Lidl removes slots from it's stores

- Individual events in people's lives

Not caused by Covid-19

Timeline 2020-2021



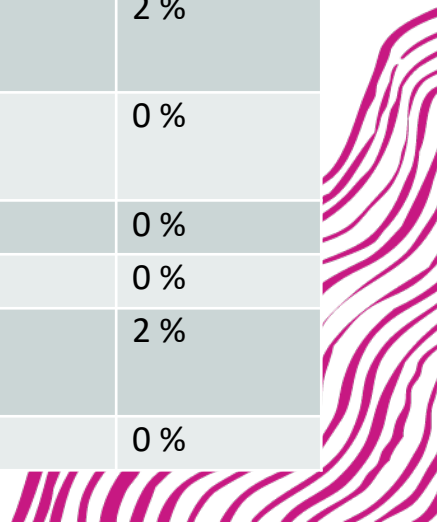
Veikkaus revenue: (2019) 1 690,7 milj. € → (2021) 1100,1 milj. €

Contacts to Helpline 2018-2021

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Gamblers	1611	1665	1385	1445
Gamers	9	8	13	15
Close ones	538	590	522	553
Professionals	52	41	62	45
In all real contacts	2210	2304	1982	2058
<i>False contacts</i>	626	662	624	1181



	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2021
Primary game to cause problems	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	%
Slots online	389	43 %	288	45 %	295	54 %
Slots offline	363	40 %	157	24 %	50	9 %
Casino games online	68	7 %	89	14 %	48	9 %
Online betting	39	4 %	46	7 %	62	11 %
Scratch cards	13	1 %	10	2 %	37	7 %
Offline betting	10	1 %	10	2 %	10	2 %
Online poker	10	1 %	13	2 %	12	2 %
Casino games offline	7	1 %	5	1 %	5	1 %
Online scratch cards	3	0 %	1	0%	0	0 %
Lotteries (slow ones)	3	0 %	15	2 %	9	2 %
Lotteries (fast ones)	3	0 %	1	0 %	1	0 %
Poker offline	2	0 %	2	0 %	1	0 %
Toto games	1	0 %	5	1 %	3	0 %
Others	1	0 %	2	0 %	9	2 %
Private betting	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %



Online/Offline gambling (Helpline/ gamblers)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Mostly online	44 %	62 %	62 %	75 %	85 %
Mostly offline	42 %	31 %	30 %	18 %	11 %
Both	12 %	7 %	8 %	7 %	4 %

(2019 N = 1362/ 2020 N = 1214/ 2021 N = 1273)

Online gamblers, when operator was told (N = 302):

- 15 % gambled only within Veikkaus/monopoly
- 14 % Both Veikkaus and others
- 71 % Only operators outside monopoly (2020 58 %)

Whole population
(THL 2019):
Gambled online 36 %
(women 27 %/ men 46 %)
Gambled outside of monopoli
6 %

Experiences from gamblers

- Closed down slot machines were a big relief to many gamblers:
 - *“I can finally go to the store and actually buy some food”*
 - *“Now I feel safe to go and buy food”*
 - *“Maybe I can afford to buy a new jacket. The old one is almost unusable”*
 - *“Maybe I can stop gambling for good”*
- Isolation, working from home and more spare time increased online gambling for some.
- Staying home with the family and lack of privacy decreased gambling for some and for some it aggravated conflicts with close ones. It also made more difficult to make private calls (chat contacts to helpline increased).
- Closing down face to face services caused some people to drop out entirely, opening new online services didn't help.
- Already difficult financial situations with big debts from gambling fell into a crisis because of layoffs/reductions of working hours.
- Stress and worrying about pandemic made situation worse for many and at the same time access to mental health services declined severely.

Thank you!

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