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## **EU 2020 Strategy Submission**

The European Commission is right to emphasize the value of an Online Single Market in its EU 2020 Strategy. Eliminating barriers to e-commerce will go a long way toward realizing the potential of the digital economy to provide quality services to consumers and create high value jobs across the EU. Recent investigations by the Commission have shown however, that significant obstacles to e-commerce are commonplace. As one of the largest and most vibrant sectors of the European digital market, the remote gambling industry is especially affected by protectionist policies that distort competition and harm consumers.

The Remote Gambling Association represents the world's largest licensed, and stock market-listed remote gambling companies and provides the industry with a single voice on all the issues of importance to regulators, legislators, and key decision makers around the world. Our members are licensed in Europe and are the leaders in a burgeoning online market that generated a gross win of €7bn in Europe in 2008 and grew at an average rate of 36% between 2005 and 2008. Further growth is projected for the European market, approaching €10bn by 2012, due to increased consumer demand. Nevertheless, this growth and the jobs it has created are being increasingly threatened by short-sighted national policies.

The internet is a borderless medium that offers tremendous potential for creating commercial linkages among businesses and consumers in Europe. It is especially valuable for innovative and creative small and medium-size enterprises that can quickly adapt to the needs of consumers. At the same time that Europe's interior borders are becoming more open to traditional goods and services, there is a divergent trend to impose restrictive barriers on cross-border e-commerce. The Commission recently found that 61% of all cross-border electronic retail transactions failed due to the existence of national barriers. Clearly, the EU 2020 Strategy must aim to remove these barriers to allow Europe to access the total benefits of the digital market.

Consumers and operators in the remote gambling sector are confronted with unjustifiable cross-border obstacles as well as confusing and unpredictable national regulations. Although a consumer is free to travel to another Member State to play in a casino, many Member States prevent that consumer from using a personal computer to visit an entirely legal and licensed online casino based in another Member State. In part, this is based on a damaging misperception that gambling through the internet is more harmful than traditional, land-based gambling. Similar groundless concerns about the inherent risks of the internet afflict many other e-commerce businesses and cause policymakers to mistakenly hinder e-commerce. The promotion and strengthening of an Online Single Market would help to safeguard consumers and ensure that European e-commerce businesses are placed on a level-playing field with their offline counterparts.

A core component of the EU 2020 Strategy should therefore be the promotion of a thriving digital economy in which consumers and businesses can transact freely, efficiently, and with confidence. Only in this way can the remote gambling sector meet the demand of European consumers for fair, safe, and fun remote gambling services and continue to be world leaders in this thriving and innovative market.