



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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Commission sets out an action plan for online gambling

Online gambling is one of the fastest growing service activities in the EU, with annual growth rates of almost 15% and an estimated €13 billion in annual revenues in 2015. It continues to develop alongside the fast-paced progress of online technology. Online gambling services cover a range of games of chance such as sports betting and poker, casino and lotteries, with 6.8 million consumers participating in one or more types of online gambling. However, there are also thousands of unregulated gambling websites, often from outside the EU, to which consumers are exposed and which carry significant risks such as fraud and money laundering.

Online gambling in the EU is characterised by diverse national rules. Notwithstanding their obligation to comply with EU rules, Member States may indeed restrict or limit the supply of all or certain types of online gambling services on the basis of public interest objectives that they seek to protect in relation to gambling. An increasing number of Member States are seeking to address the challenges they face and are reviewing their national regulations and practices. However, the prevailing regulatory, societal and technical issues in the EU cannot be tackled adequately by Member States individually. This is especially true given the cross-border dimension of online gambling.

Today, the Commission is unveiling an action plan, with a series of initiatives over the next two years aimed at clarifying the regulation of online gambling and encouraging cooperation between Member States.

Internal Market and Services Commissioner Michel Barnier said: "Consumers, but more broadly all citizens must be adequately protected, money laundering and fraud must be prevented, sport must be safeguarded against betting-related match-fixing and national rules must comply with EU law. These are the objectives of the action plan we have adopted today".

Key elements of the Communication

The Commission is not proposing EU-wide legislation on online gambling. It is proposing a comprehensive set of actions and common principles on protection.

While Member States are in principle free to set the objectives of their policies on online gambling, ensuring compliance of national law with the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) is a prerequisite of a successful EU policy on online gambling. The Commission will establish an expert group this year to facilitate exchanges of experience on regulation between Member States. This will help to develop a well-regulated, safer online gambling sector in the EU, which will help turn consumers away from unregulated sites.

Children and other vulnerable groups need protection as 75% of EU citizens under the age of 17 use the internet. The Commission is encouraging the development of better age-verification tools and online content filters. It is also pushing for more responsible advertising and increased parental awareness of the dangers associated with gambling.

In addition to protecting minors from exposure, there is a responsibility to protect those citizens and families who have already suffered from a gambling addiction (between 0.5-3% of the population) or other forms of gambling-related disorders by finding effective methods of treatment and prevention. For this a better understanding of the underlying causes is needed.

Another important objective is to prevent and deter fraud and money-laundering through online gambling. Due to the cross-border nature, individual Member States cannot effectively apply anti-fraud mechanisms. An approach that brings together the EU, Member States and industry is necessary to tackle the problem from all angles.

A high level of cooperation is needed, in particular to safeguard the integrity of sports. Betting-related match-fixing goes against the very nature of fair play and competition that defines sport. To combat it, the Commission will promote faster information exchange, whistle-blowing mechanisms, and overall cooperation at national and international level between stakeholders, operators, and regulators to preserve the integrity of sports, as well as better education and increased awareness of sportspeople.

In concrete terms, the Commission will adopt three Recommendations addressed to the Member States, namely on i) common protection of consumers, ii) responsible gambling advertising and iii) the prevention and fight against betting-related match-fixing.

Other measures foresee, inter alia, support to the benchmarking and testing of parental control tools; the extension of the scope of the anti-money laundering directive; the promotion of international cooperation for the prevention of match-fixing.

Member States are also urged, for example, to carry out surveys and data collection on gambling disorders; to promote the training of the judiciary on fraud and money laundering and to set up national contact points bringing together all actors involved in fighting match fixing.

Background and next steps

Today's communication is a follow-up to the Green Paper consultation held last year (see [IP/11/358](#)).

A first expert group meeting with the Member States is foreseen for December 2012, and in 2013, the Commission will organise a stakeholder conference.

The Commission will evaluate the implementation of the action plan and assess progress achieved throughout the EU two years after the adoption of the Communication.

Starting today, the Commission will send requests for information to the Member States against whom infringement cases have been open since 2008 to get a full and exact update about the latest developments on national legislation. Information will also be requested from those Member States against whom complaints have been registered. The Commission hopes that Member States' cooperation will lead to a timely and satisfactory resolution regarding the compatibility of national measures with existing EU law.

See also [MEMO/12/798](#)

More information

Communication and accompanying staff working document as well as the summary of replies to the Green Paper public consultation are available on the Commission's website: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/gambling_en.htm

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