



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

Brussels, 14 July 2014

## **Online gambling: Commission recommends principles to ensure effective protection of consumers**

The European Commission has today adopted a Recommendation on online gambling services. It encourages Member States to pursue a high level of protection for consumers, players and minors through the adoption of principles for online gambling services and for responsible advertising and sponsorship of those services. The aims of the principles are to safeguard health and to minimise the eventual economic harm that may result from compulsive or excessive gambling.

"Today's Recommendation delivers one of the core elements of the Commission's 2012 action plan on online gambling services" said Vice-President Michel Barnier, responsible for Internal Market and Services. "We must better protect all citizens, and in particular our children, from the risks associated with gambling. We now look to the Member States, but also to online gambling operators, to match our ambition for a high level of consumer protection throughout the EU in this fast growing digital sector."

### **Main elements**

The Commission's Recommendation sets out a number of principles that Member States are invited to take up in their gambling regulations:

- Basic information requirements for gambling websites, in particular to ensure that consumers are provided with sufficient information to understand the risks related to gambling. Commercial communication (advertising and sponsorship) should be carried out in a responsible way.
- Member States should ensure that minors are not able to gamble online, and that rules are in place to minimise their contact with gambling, including through advertising or promotion of gambling services whether broadcast or displayed.
- There should be a registration process to open a player account so that consumers have to provide details of age and identity for verification by the operators. This should also enable operators to keep track of player behaviour and raise the alarm if necessary.

- Ongoing support should be available to players to prevent gambling-related problems, by equipping them with tools to keep gambling under control: possibilities to set spending limits during the registration process, to get information alerts about winnings and losses whilst playing, and to take time out from gambling.
- Players should have access to helplines they can call for assistance about their gambling behaviour, and they should be able to easily exclude themselves from gambling websites.
- Advertising and sponsorship of online gambling services should be more socially responsible and transparent. For example, it should not make unfounded statements about chances of winning, exert pressure to gamble, or suggest that gambling resolves social, professional, personal or financial problems.
- Member States should ensure that training is provided to employees of online gambling operators interacting with players to ensure they understand problem gambling issues and are able to liaise with the players appropriately.

Member States are also invited to carry out awareness-raising campaigns about gambling and related risks, as well as to collect data about the opening and closing of player accounts and breaches of commercial communication rules. Member States should also designate competent regulatory authorities to help ensure, in an independent manner, effective monitoring of compliance with the Recommendation.

## Background

The Recommendation was announced in the Commission's action plan "Towards a comprehensive European framework for online gambling" adopted on 23 October 2012 ([IP/12/1135](#) and [MEMO/12/798](#)).

The fast-paced progress of online technology, with the development of mobile phones and smart phones, tablets and digital TV, goes hand-in-hand with an increase in the offer and use of online gambling services in Europe. With close to 7 million EU consumers participating in online gambling services, the EU online gambling market represents 45% of the world market share.

For the majority of people in the EU who take part in online gambling, it is a recreational activity. However, there are a number of risks associated with gambling. It is estimated that between 0.1-0.8% of the general adult population suffers a gambling disorder and an additional 0.1-2.2% demonstrate potentially problematic gambling involvement. Gambling becomes a problem when it ceases to be purely enjoyable and turns into dependence. Children and adolescents are also increasingly at risk, due to the fact that they use the internet more and more for information or entertainment, and can easily come into contact with gambling advertising and gambling websites. Therefore, preventive measures are necessary to minimise potential harm and to guarantee that online gambling services are offered and promoted in a responsible manner.

In addition, several Member States are currently reviewing their legal frameworks in this area and should be able to use the Recommendation as guidance.

**Next steps:** The Recommendation invites Member States to inform the Commission about the measures taken in light of the Recommendation 18 months after its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union. The Commission will evaluate the measures taken by Member States 30 months after publication.

**More information:**

The Recommendation is accompanied by an impact assessment and a behavioural study on online gambling and adequate measures for the protection of consumers. These are available on the Commission's website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/gambling/initiatives/index\\_en.htm#recommendation](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/gambling/initiatives/index_en.htm#recommendation)

See also [MEMO/14/484](#)

Contacts :

[Chantal Hughes](#) (+32 2 296 44 50)

[Carmel Dunne](#) (+32 2 299 88 94)

[Audrey Augier](#) (+32 2 297 16 07)