

Stakeholders pleased with Parliament's report

By Sophie Mosca | Wednesday 16 November 2011

The European Parliament's report on online gambling, adopted on 15 November, was greeted positively on the whole by stakeholders, for different reasons.

For private operators of gambling services, strengthening the availability of legal activity requires common European standards to reduce their administrative burden. Clive Hawkwood of the Remote Gambling Association commented that "the report recommends transparent and non-discriminatory licensing procedures that avoid duplication and useless controls in the EU". Most of these operators welcome MEPs' call for the pursuit of infringement cases. Sigrid Ligné of the European Gaming and Betting Association (EGBA) calls on the Commission to "curb further fragmentation of the internal market by consistently declaring protectionist national regimes to be incompatible with EU law". The Commission should "urgently address the complaints received and the infringement backlog, an area where it has taken no action since 2008". David Purvis of Stanleybet insists on this point because "many operators see their fundamental rights denied, to the detriment of growth and job creation".

European Lotteries, which represents the monopolies, notes that the report recognises member states' freedom to choose between total or partial prohibition, a national monopoly or licensing, and that it rejects application of the mutual recognition principle. The organisation's head, Friedrich Stickler, said he is "pleased with the EP's demand that online gambling operators who infringe the law of one member state should be deprived of their licence in other member states".

For Mathieu Moreuil of the Sports Rights Owners' Coalition (SROC), "it is an important step to obtain recognition of the risks of abuse through online sports betting of events we organise. We applaud the request for the introduction of recognition of binding contractual relations between us and the organisers of sports betting, which will enable us to protect our rights".

The European Pari-Mutuel Association (EPMA) echoes that view, noting, however, that support for the horse-racing sector "goes beyond protection of integrity or a mere sponsoring initiative". It regrets that it was not given specific consideration, as in the European Commission's green paper.

Khalid Ali of the European Sports Security Association (ESSA) points out that "there is no proof of exacerbation of the risk of fraud due to the emergence of the sector of online sports betting, nor of a risk to the integrity of sport". He prefers to focus the effort in this area on illegal gambling by raising awareness among players with licensed betting operators, which finance the ESSA for this purpose.