NEWSletter



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ICE BARCELONA 2025

One of the world's most important gambling events, ICE Barcelona 2025, will be held for the first time in Barcelona this year, from 20-22 January 2025 at the Fira Barcelona Gran Via. This change comes after many years of the show traditionally being held in London. The organisers decided to make the move mainly due to the larger capacity and more modern exhibition space of the Barcelona Convention Centre. Another reason was Barcelona's strategic location as a key European hub for innovation and technology in the gaming industry.



Great response to Jan Řehola's performance

The most important panel debate of the second day was the discussion on *"Staying Ahead: AI in Detection of Risk Players"* at the Sustainable Gambling Zone, which was also attended by Jan Řehola, Director of the Institute for Gambling Regulation (IPRH). His participation in the discussion was very well received, especially thanks to his detailed presentation of the Responsible Gambling project, which is based on the principle of mutual trust and cooperation between gambling operators, state authorities, addictionologists, academics and other experts. It is this approach that makes the project successful and helps to create safer conditions for gambling in the Czech Republic.

Artificial intelligence in the prevention of problem gambling

Given the focus of the debate on the role of artificial intelligence in detecting risky players, Jan Řehola also introduced IRIS, a tool developed by IPRH that specializes in this very issue. Together with Dr. Mary Donohue from the Digital Wellness Center and Rasmus Kjaergaard from Mindway AI, they discussed in detail the challenges and opportunities of using AI tools in the regulation of the gambling industry.



ICE Barcelona as a centre of innovation

This year's ICE Barcelona attracted over 56,000 professionals from more than 170 countries and offered stands from more than 600 exhibitors. The move to Barcelona has enabled greater connectivity with technological innovation and provided a more modern environment for showcasing the latest trends in the gaming industry.



Jan Řehola's appearance at this prestigious event underlines the importance of international cooperation and innovation in the field of responsible gaming and addiction prevention. This trend suggests that technology and artificial intelligence will continue to play a key role in the future of the gambling industry.

ROUND TABLE ON MATCHFIXING

NÁRODNÍ SPORTOVNÍ AGENTURA

On 30 January 2025, the National Sports Agency (NSA) hosted a roundtable discussion on the issue of match-fixing, commonly known as match-fixing. The meeting was attended by representatives of the NSA, including its chairman Ondrej Šebek, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Finance (Department 73 - Ing. Bureš), the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office in Olomouc, the National Centre for the Fight against Organized Crime (NCOZ), the Czech Olympic Committee, the Football Association of the Czech Republic (FAČR) and the Czech Basketball Federation. Among the participants of the round table were also representatives of IPRH who contributed their expertise to the discussion.

Key conclusions of the meeting

Participants agreed that match-fixing is a very serious problem that requires close cooperation between sports associations, law enforcement authorities and betting operators. Therefore, they agreed to establish a national platform to serve as a focal point for effective information sharing between these entities in order to prevent match-fixing.

Cooperation with betting operators

A number of important points have been discussed in relation to fixed-odds betting operators:

- IPRH declared the willingness of operators to participate in protecting the integrity of sporting events.
- The NCOZ representatives expressed interest in the possibility of carrying out an expert analysis of the data at their disposal on the basis of a memorandum with Sportradar in order to identify cases of match-fixing.
- The FAČR has drawn attention to the fact that there are virtually no sanctions for breaches of Section 38(4) of the Gambling Act, which prohibits players, coaches and officials from betting on their own competitions. The FAČR believes that betting operators do not sufficiently monitor compliance with this rule and do not provide the necessary data to the Customs Administration or the Ministry of Finance.
- IPRH responded that operators actively analyse the bets received and try to prevent such situations as far as possible. However, it is not realistically possible to eliminate such cases completely.
- At the same time, it was pointed out that the low number of offences may be related to the fact that operators suspecting a violation of Section 38(4) of the Betting Act simply do not allow bets to be placed, which means that no offence is committed and there is no need to report it to the authorities.

The FAČR and a representative of the High State Prosecutor's Office expressed interest in direct contact with specific persons within the betting operators to deal with specific cases.

Education as a key prevention tool

All parties agreed that education of players, coaches and officials is one of the key measures in the fight against match-fixing. The FAČR is already implementing training in this area and IPRH informed about a training for U17 players of Dynamo České Budějovice, focused on the risks associated with excessive participation in gambling. The participants agreed that there is an opportunity for joint training and closer cooperation between the NSA, FAČR and IPRH.

Next steps

The meeting represented an important step towards improving the integrity of sports competitions in the Czech Republic and opened up space for constructive cooperation. The NSA is planning further meetings of this working group and would welcome the active involvement of all stakeholders. Following the roundtable, a separate meeting between the NSA and the IPRH is also being prepared to discuss concrete possibilities for further cooperation in the area of match-fixing prevention.

Creating an effective system for preventing and detecting manipulation of sport results is a key objective for all stakeholders. By working together, the trans-

parency, fairness and credibility of Czech sport can be strengthened.

ANOTHER AMENDMENT TO THE AML LAW BRINGS NEW OBLIGATIONS



As of 30 December 2024, another amendment to the AML Act came into force. Among other changes, there is also a change in the area of designation and reporting of the so-called contact person. The scope of information that must be reported together with the designation of the contact person has been expanded. Gambling operators will now also be obliged to inform the Financial Analysis Office (FAO) **of the times when the contact person can be contacted**. These times must correspond to the operating hours of the gaming premises or the times during which commercial transactions are carried out. **The obligation to declare the contact person and the hours during which he/she will be available applies to all gambling operators**, including those who have already declared a contact person. It is therefore necessary to make the notification again with updated details.

On 1 February 2025, the FAO published on its website an interactive form for reporting a contact person. This form is available on the web at **formulare.fau.gov.cz**. Notification can only be made via this form, which must then be sent to the FAO via data mailbox. The form allows multiple contact persons to be reported at the same time.

Gambling operators must comply with this obligation by **Monday 3 March 2025** at the latest. If they fail to do so, they face possible sanctions from the FAO.

TURKEY STEPS UP FIGHT AGAINST ILLEGAL GAMBLING. 233,000 SITES BLOCKED IN 2024

Turkish Treasury and Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek has warned of the dangers of illegal gambling for consumers and its impact on tax evasion. This warning comes after Turkish authorities blocked access to a record 233,000 illegal gambling sites in 2024.

The Directorate General of the National Lottery Administration (NLA), which falls under the Ministry of Finance, has reported the sites to the Information Technology and Communications Authority, continuing the government's crackdown on illegal online gambling. Minister Şimşek stressed that the cabinet is "determined" to prevent illegal economic activities that not only weaken the tax system but also endanger citizens.

Turkey is taking comprehensive measures against illegal betting, virtual gambling and illegal draws, and the trend of crackdowns is increasing. In 2023, 168,000 such sites were blocked, a significant increase this year.

Statistics show that 56% of these sites originated in the USA, 17% in Armenia and 6% were of "Dutch origin". In addition to blocking sites, Turkish authorities have filed criminal complaints against 375,367 websites and 6,731 unique domain names for illegal gambling.

With this move, the Turkish government is signalling its uncompromising approach to tackling illegal gambling practices, which pose both an economic and social risk. And, in the words of Minister Şimşek, it will toughen its approach even further.

SWEDEN TARGETS INFLUECERS PROMOTING GAMBLING



Sweden is facing an unprecedented case that may change the way influencers view gambling liability. The unnamed social media star, who has 150,000 followers on her account, was taken into custody the second week of January for promoting illegal gambling.

Influencer has been charged with a number of offences, including accounting fraud, tax evasion, money laundering in business and obstruction of tax audit. The main charge, however, relates to promoting illegal gambling.

According to the information available, the influencer repeatedly streamed his casino gaming on platforms that were not licensed by the Swedish Gambling Authority (SGA). A major problem was that his content was also viewed by minors, on whom gambling promotion can have a serious impact.

"The promotion of unlicensed gambling, especially to minors, is illegal in our country," said Gustaf Hoffstedt, Secretary General of the Swedish Online Gambling Trade Association. *"It's more a question of law enforcement authorities starting to tackle these cases as a matter of priority."*

Swedish Gambling Authority under pressure

The incident took place at a time when the Swedish Gambling Authority was facing another problem - allegations of a data leak from the Spelpaus.se self-excluded player registry. A documentary aired on radio station P1 claimed that there had been a data breach.

SGA rejected these claims and assured the public that all information in the registry is encrypted. *"There is no information as to whether or not a self-excluded person is addicted to gambling,"* the regulator said.

Hoffstedt commented: *"These allegations are not new. I have been hearing similar rumours for several years, but no evidence has been presented so far."* He also added that it is up to the Swedish authorities to determine whether the allegations are justified or whether other challenges should be addressed.

The global trend of influencer accountability

The case of the Swedish influencer fits into a broader trend of tightening rules for gambling promotions on social media. Similar accusations have been made in the past in other countries such as Brazil, where influencers face lawsuits for promoting illegal gambling sites linked to fraud.

This case could set an important precedent for Sweden and perhaps other European countries when it comes to liability for content shared on social platforms. The outcome of the trial will be eagerly awaited not only in Sweden but also in the international community monitoring the regulation of the digital space.

DUTCH REGULATOR CRACKS DOWN ON GAMBLING ADVERTISING

The Dutch Gambling Authority (KSA) has recently issued seven warnings to gambling operators for breaches of the Advertising Regulation. These offences, often described as random, included a variety of cases that the regulator described as forms of non-targeted advertising, which has been completely banned in the Netherlands since last summer.

One of the cases was advertising on a vehicle during a motor racing event. After , the vehicle was driven on public roads, still with the gambling advertisement visible. *"Advertising on cars is a form of non-targeted advertising and is prohibited,"* the KSA said in a statement. After alerting the operator, he immediately removed the ads and brought everything in line with the rules.

Another warning concerned an advertisement placed in a gymnasium frequented mainly by young people. Here, the regulator stressed that advertisements targeting

vulnerable age groups were a serious infringement.

The third type of offence focused on the use of personal models and animated characters in advertising. *"The KSA believes that in this way the advertisement appeals primarily to a younger audience, which is unacceptable,"* the authority said.



The most recent cases related to the promotion of gambling in connection with Formula 1 athlete Max Verstappen. Although the operators did not directly use the likeness of the famous driver, they used puns and visuals that clearly suggested him. According to the KSA, this is also a prohibited form of advertising.

Implications and future plans

The warnings issued by the KSA are not yet linked to fines, but the authority warns that further breaches may lead to more severe sanctions. For 2025, the plan is to focus on protecting minors and young adults, overseeing the duty of care for players and combating illegal offers and advertising.

The KSA also reminds that sponsorship of teams, clubs and competitions, as well as advertising on jerseys, is prohibited from 1 July 2024. *"It is the responsibility of gambling operators to comply with the applicable advertising rules at all times, even when third parties such as buying agencies are involved in advertising,"* the KSA added. Further guidance on advertising rules will be published in spring 2025.

GAMBLING COMMISSION REVEALS TENFOLD INCREASE IN REMOVAL OF ILLEGAL SITES



The UK Gambling Commission has seen record successes in the fight against illegal online gambling this year. The regulator helped to take down 264 illegal sites - a tenfold increase on the previous year. This dramatic increase illustrates the Commission's increasingly intense efforts to keep the UK gambling market under control.

Revealing statistics and achievements

The Commission's Director General, Andrew Rhodes, presented the latest results during his speech at the ICE World Regulatory Briefing event. He focused on the state of the UK gambling market and action against illegal operators, particularly in the digital space.

The Commission has reported to Google more than 102 000 URLs linked to illegal gambling activity in the UK. This resulted in the removal of 64,000 sites and the complete closure of 264 illegal sites. These figures far exceed the statistics from last year and confirm the effectiveness of the new regulatory measures.

Fight against illegal gambling

The Commission has also issued over 770 cease and desist orders in relation to illegal gambling. Of these, 262 were addressed to operators and 205 to advertisers. Although Rhodes is pleased with these actions, he stresses the need to persevere: *"Our aim is to prevent the illegal market from operating on a large scale in Britain."*

The Commission is focusing not only on individual operators, but also on key elements of the ecosystem - hosting services, payment method providers, software companies and search engines. The aim is to prevent not only the operation but also the availability of illegal gambling services.

Call for licensed operators

During his speech, Rhodes called on licensed operators to actively support the Commission's efforts and not allow illegal operators to abuse their games or infrastructure. A week before this statement, the Commission issued a warning notice when it discovered that some licensed games were being used by illegal sites.

"It would not be logical for licensed operators to work with those who promote illegal competition," Rhodes said. The commission also stressed that if it finds a direct link between a licensed operator and illegal activity, it can immediately proceed to suspend or revoke the licence.

Record results of the regulated market

Despite concerns about illegal activity, Rhodes is optimistic about a regulated market in Britain. He referred to the latest gross gambling yield (GGY) figures, published in October, which showed record results. In the third quarter, GGY reached £1.32 billion, mainly due to a 16% increase in online slots activity.

Rhodes said the UK regulated market has a bright future and the Commission will continue to fight illegal gambling to ensure its continued growth and stability.

GERMANY IN 2025?



When the Interstate Gambling Treaty (Glücksspielstaatsvertrag) came into force in Germany on 1 July 2021, it was presented as a turning point for the regulation of online gambling. Daniel Hagemeier, a member of the ruling CDU party in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), underlined its importance with a statement:

"The Interstate Gaming Compact and our implementation in NSW must strike a balance between state regulation and freedom. We must protect people with a high potential for addiction from the temptation of gambling, but respect the freedom of each individual to gamble if they so desire. Our goal is not to demonize gambling and drive it into the unknown, but to channel it."

Now, almost four years later, that balance remains elusive. The Treaty has succeeded in creating a legal framework, but its implementation is fraught with problems. That is why in 2025 Germany will focus on two critical areas shaping the online gambling sector: player entitlements and regulatory arrangements.

Player says: Waiting for a major ruling from the European Court of Justice

In recent years, player chargeback claims have emerged as a pressing issue in the online gambling industry in Germany. Courts across the country are seeing an increase in such claims, mostly due to large litigation funding companies supporting such claims. While the majority of German courts recognize the claims of gamblers, many cases have special circumstances that lead to the dismissal of claims.

Both the German Federal Court of Justice (BGH) and the Regional Court (LG) in Erfurt recently suspended proceedings in key cases and referred key legal issues to the European Court of Justice (ECJ). These questions concern the interpretation of EU law and its interaction with national gambling regulations for both betting shops and casinos/slot machines.
The ECJ's decisions, which are expected no earlier than the end of 2025 or even 2026, are likely to have far-reaching consequences. They could either strengthen the claims of thousands of players seeking refunds, or provide legal certainty that will strengthen operators' positions. In the meantime, the uncertainty creates significant financial risks for litigation funders and gambling companies alike.

Following the difficult developments in the case law on players' claims, the referrals and the ECJ's approach may be a cause for some optimism in the industry.

Regulatory Challenges: Debates before the evaluation of the Interstate Treaty

The German Interstate Gambling Treaty (Glücksspielstaatsvertrag), which came into force in July 2021, is approaching a major milestone as it undergoes a fundamental evaluation. The process has already sparked heated debates among regulators, politicians and industry stakeholders about potential changes to the framework.

The main problems include:

- **Restrictions on advertising:** There is a widening gap between proponents of advertising bans and those who advocate more liberalised advertising rules to ensure that the legal market remains attractive compared to unregulated offshore providers.
- **Market attractiveness:** Regulations, including the €1 per spin deposit limit on virtual slots and the mandatory five-second interval between spins, are under scrutiny. Even the Higher Administrative Court of Saxony-Anhalt, which eventually dealt with disputes between many operators and the gambling authority, questioned whether these measures make the regulated market too unattractive for players, and suggested that this is "a decisive reason why players resort to the black market".

The outcome of these debates will have important implications for the future of the regulated market in Germany. Any failure to address the attractiveness of the legal market or underestimation of the black market could undermine the objectives of the Treaty.