NEWSletter



February

INSTITUT
PRO REGULACI
HAZARDNÍCH HER

2026

A MISLEADING TRILLION: EVEN WITH BETTER DATA, MEDIA SHORTCUTS STILL PREVAIL

The Czech gambling market attracted media attention again this year. Headlines proclaimed that Czechs had wagered more than one trillion crowns for the first time - an eye-catching figure that naturally grabs attention. At the same time, however, it showed just how easily economic reality can be replaced by a misleading shortcut.


ČTK ČESKÉ NOVINY

ČR | Svět | Ekonomika | Kultura

Volby 2025: Zpravodajství Výsledky Foto

Lidé v Česku loni v hazardních hrách poprvé vsadili přes bilion korun

Aktual.: 25.02.2026 10:39 Vydáno: 25.02.2026, 10:07

This year, however, the situation differed from previous years. For the first time, there was a systematic effort to provide proper context for the published data, both from the professional community and in cooperation with public authorities.

A more active role in preparing the data

The Institute for Gambling Regulation (IPRH) was far more actively involved in this year's publication process than in the past. We communicated with major media outlets in advance and provided them with an overview of the key indicators, including guidance on how they should be interpreted.

Cooperation with the Financial Administration was equally important. Following joint discussions, an important change was introduced: the GGR (Gross Gaming Revenue) indicator - in other words, the market's actual economic output - was newly added to the official materials.

We regard the inclusion of GGR as a concrete and significant step forward. Without this indicator, the gambling market cannot be analysed in any meaningful way.

At the same time, we were given an opportunity to comment on the explanatory notes accompanying the individual items in the tables later used by journalists. The purpose of this material was primarily to translate technical terminology into plain language - to explain clearly what each item means, how the figures relate to one another, and which indicators are truly decisive for evaluating the market.

We consider this translation into plain language to be a key precondition for preventing data from being misinterpreted in the future.

What the authorities left unfinished

Even so, the job remained unfinished. Although the Financial Administration prepared methodological explanations for the individual indicators, those explanations were not published at the same time as the data itself.

As a result, the figures entered the public domain without the necessary context. That timing mismatch proved to be a major problem.

Journalists therefore largely reverted to the familiar and overly simplistic approach of treating the total volume wagered as the main metric.

But that is only half the equation. Without considering winnings paid out - and without working with GGR - it leads to conclusions that do not reflect the market's economic reality.

Education versus headline logic

It is only fair to acknowledge that some media outlets were willing to add context. In several cases, IPRH was given the opportunity to explain the difference between the volume of bets and the market's actual revenues, and to place the figures in a broader framework - for example in Seznam Zprávy, on iDNES.cz, and on Czech Television.

At the same time, however, it became clear once again that headlines and agency copy have a decisive influen-

ce on the final public message. Once a simple narrative takes hold - in this case, “a trillion crowns wagered” - it is very difficult to correct.

CTK and the domino effect

We saw a fundamental problem in the agency coverage. The Czech News Agency based its reporting primarily on the total volume of bets and used that figure to draw broader conclusions about market developments.

That framing was then picked up by a number of other media outlets without further verification.

We reacted immediately and sent the Czech News Agency a detailed statement identifying specific errors in the interpretation of the data and drawing attention to the misleading way the figures had been presented. To date, however, we have received no response.

When absurdity helps explain reality

Our colleague Petr Kozák also responded to the situation, choosing a less conventional - but all the more fitting - form: satire. In his text “National Jackpot: Czechs Won a Trillion”, he pushed the media's logic to an absurd conclusion: if we focused only on the volume of bets, we could just as well claim that Czechs had “won a trillion crowns” and solved their economic problems.

That exaggeration captures the essence of the problem with remarkable precision. As he aptly points out, working with a single number means working with only half the formula - and no meaningful result can be calculated from that.

Put differently, if we applied the same logic elsewhere, economics would stop being a discipline and become a headline.

A long road to change

This year's experience shows two things. On the one hand, concrete progress is possible - whether by adding GGR to official statistics or by opening a dialogue with the Financial Administration.

On the other hand, it also confirms that without timely publication of the methodology and without consistent work with data, media interpretation will continue to slip into simplification.

IPRH will therefore continue not only to communicate with the media, but also to work with institutions to ensure that data is presented fully and clearly from the very start.

Because the way we talk about gambling fundamentally shapes the decisions that are ultimately made about its regulation.

A TRIBUTE TO IPRH: WE ARE CO-ORGANISING RESPONSIBLE GAMING DAY AT HIPTHER PRAGUE SUMMIT 2026

The Institute for Gambling Regulation (IPRH) is honoured to co-organise one day of this year's HIPTHER Prague Summit. A thematic block focused on responsible gaming and player protection will take place on the second day of the conference, 25 March, on the summit's main stage.

The programme will focus on current issues in safer gaming, player protection, regulatory trends, compliance, as well as illegal gambling and its new forms. The event will bring together lawyers, regulators, responsible gaming specialists and industry representatives to discuss player protection, the sustainable development of the legal market, and the risks associated with growing activity outside the regulated sector.

Three key themes

IRIS: one player, one view across operators

One of the main items on the programme will be the presentation of the IRIS project. By monitoring player behaviour across multiple operators rather than just one, IRIS enables earlier and more effective risk detection and strengthens player protection in practice. The current status of the project will be presented by its project manager, Petr Rybák.

How much does illegal gambling cost the Czech Republic?

Another key part of the programme will be an economic study by the Centre for Economic and Market Analysis



(CETA). The study will provide data on the scale of the illegal market, losses generated outside the legal sector, and the impact on tax revenues. The findings will be presented by one of the study's authors, Jakub Žofčák.

Can the IPRH model expand beyond the Czech Republic?

The panel discussion will bring together representatives of the Czech, Slovak and Polish institutes. The debate will focus on cross-border cooperation in regulation and player protection, and on whether the IPRH model can be transferred to other countries. IPRH is not a traditional industry association, but a unique platform that brings together businesses, regulators, public authorities, experts and addiction specialists within one functional ecosystem.

A shared commitment to a safer market

The cooperation between HIPTHER and IPRH reflects a shared commitment to promoting safer gaming, informed debate and an active approach to the challenges associated with illegal gambling.

“As the gaming environment evolves, so must our approaches to player protection. This thematic day will allow us to demonstrate how technology, data, research and accountability can work together to create a safer environment,” says Petr Kozák, lawyer and secretary of IPRH.

Responsible Gaming Day will be a central part of the 10th anniversary edition of the HIPTHER Prague Summit, a two-day conference that will bring together leaders from gaming, fintech, AI, blockchain and regulation to discuss the future of the industry.

GAMBLING AND EET: NO CHANGE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC, WHILE SLOVAKIA HAD TO CLARIFY THE RULES

With the reopening of the debate on EET 2.0 in the Czech Republic, the question has resurfaced whether the new sales-registration regime will also apply to gambling. In the Czech context, however, the situation has long been clear. The original Act on Registration of Sales, No. 112/2016 Coll., expressly provided that gambling revenue does not constitute registered sales and is therefore not subject to EET. The current EET 2.0 proposal, submitted by the Ministry of Finance for comments in February 2026, follows the same approach. In other words, even under the new sales-recording model, gambling operators should remain outside the general EET regime with respect to gambling transactions.

A more interesting development took place in Slovakia. As of 1 January 2026, the new Act No. 384/2025 Coll. on Sales Records entered into force and newly regulates the eKasa regime. Unlike Czech law, however, the Slovak legislation does not expressly exempt gambling from its scope. The local regulator - the Office for the Regulation of Gambling - therefore had to issue methodological guidance explaining that the gambling sector is subject to its own specific reporting regime under a separate decree and does not fall within the standard sales-recording regime applicable to ordinary retail and services. In practice, Slovak gambling is therefore also exempt from EET-type reporting.

A NEW STUDY PROVIDES DETAILED DATA ON GAMBLING ADVERTISING IN CZECH FOOTBALL BROADCASTS

A new study published in the Journal of Behavioral Addictions examines gambling advertising during television broadcasts of the Czech top football competition. The article, titled This is “offside”: Gambling advertising during Czech football broadcasts, offers the first comprehensive dataset on how often gambling advertising appears in Czech football broadcasts, in what form, and with what intensity. The study was authored by Filip Kovařík and David Fiedor from the Department of Geography at the Faculty of Science, Palacký University Olomouc, together with Steve Sharman from Loughborough University in the UK. The research was supported by the Czech Science Foundation as part of a project examining the impact of the gambling environment on society and vulnerable groups.

Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci

What exactly did the authors examine?

The study analysed 32 matches from four rounds of the Chance League played in August and September 2025. The authors monitored advertising content directly in the television broadcasts, including both traditional advertising spots and on-screen graphic elements. They examined the frequency of the ads, their duration, timing, the type of product promoted and the nature of the calls to action. The research did not include sponsorship elements such as logos on jerseys, LED boards around the pitch or other branding outside the advertising formats themselves. The authors therefore note that the data captures only one part of the wider marketing ecosystem.

Results: 57 ads per match

The findings indicate a very high intensity of advertising exposure. Across the 32 matches analysed, the authors recorded a total of 1,824 gambling ads - an average of 57 per match. Total advertising time reached 22,011

seconds, equivalent to roughly 11.5 minutes per game. The ads involved eight different operators. Sports betting accounted for the largest share of advertising space, representing 85% of all recorded ads. Online casinos accounted for 10.7% and lotteries for 4.3%.

Live betting as a key broadcasting element

The timing of the ads is particularly noteworthy. The authors recorded the highest number directly during live play, identifying 700 advertising appearances, or 38.4% of all recorded ads. These in-game formats came exclusively from one operator, the title partner of the competition. They included formats such as “Live Odds” and banners labelled “Live Betting” - communication directly tied to the course of the match and designed to encourage in-play betting. The study also shows that in the second half, the share of banners prompting immediate betting action increased.

Advertising sells not only the product, but also the context

The study looks not only at the volume of advertising, but also at the marketing techniques used. More than a quarter of the ads featured celebrities, particularly Czech athletes as well as other public figures. The authors also observed that some campaigns adapted to the wider social context. Toward the end of the monitoring period, for example, some campaigns were thematically linked to the upcoming parliamentary elections. According to the study, this suggests that advertising strategies in this segment are not generic, but instead draw on current events, emotion and viewers' identification with sport.

The Czech market stands out in international comparison

One of the strongest parts of the article is its international context. The authors note that foreign studies have recorded roughly four to five gambling advertisements per match during comparable football broadcasts, whereas the Czech sample showed an average of 57. The study therefore concludes that viewer exposure to gambling advertising in Czech football broadcasts significantly exceeds the levels reported in existing international literature. The authors associate this difference with a looser regulatory environment and a high degree of commercialisation in Czech football.

Why the study also matters for the market

From the operators' perspective, the study is relevant on two levels. First, it provides concrete data on how strongly gambling advertising is embedded in one of the country's most watched sports products. Second, it suggests that the high intensity of advertising exposure may become one of the arguments in future debates about the rules governing gambling advertising in sport. Although the authors do not propose a detailed legislative solution, they explicitly state that the identified level of exposure deserves regulatory attention. They also recommend that future research should look not only at broadcast advertising, but also at sponsorship, social media and the implementation of responsible gaming principles, including preventive messages and warnings.

Not the whole picture, but an important part of the debate

That is the study's main contribution. It does not seek to pass judgment on the industry as a whole, but rather provides a measurable description of one important part of the current market: the presence of gambling advertising in sports broadcasts. For operators, sports partners and regulators alike, it offers a relevant basis for further debate about where the boundary currently lies between standard commercial communication, sponsorship and growing pressure for tighter future regulation.

BRITISH GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES CONSULTATION ON A BAN ON SPONSORSHIP BY ILLEGAL GAMBLING OPERATORS

The British government is opening another chapter in gambling-market regulation. After a series of measures aimed at protecting consumers and curbing illegal offers, attention is now turning to sports sponsorship. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport, led by Lisa Nandy, has announced that it will launch a public consultation on a possible ban on sponsorship agreements between sports clubs and unlicensed gambling operators.



The end of the white-label model?

Current practice in the UK allows foreign operators without a local licence to enter into sponsorship arrangements through so-called white-label partnerships with UK licence holders. It is precisely this model that the government now wants to restrict.

Under the proposed changes, sponsorship deals could be concluded only with operators licensed by the UK Gambling Commission. This would also apply to the most visible competitions, including the Premier League.

One of the triggers for the debate was the case of the Stake brand, which continued to sponsor Everton FC after losing its British licence. Other clubs have similar arrangements, including AFC Bournemouth, Sunderland AFC and Wolverhampton Wanderers FC.

Stronger consumer protection as the main driver

Minister Nandy has stressed that the key objective is to protect players. In her view, illegal operators are not subject to the same regulatory requirements and may therefore pose greater risks.

“Fans have a right to know that the platforms they bet on are properly regulated and provide adequate protection,” Nandy said. According to her, it is unacceptable for unlicensed companies to build brand visibility through the country's biggest sports clubs.

Baroness Twycross has made a similar point, warning that unregulated gambling can exploit vulnerable groups and leave consumers without adequate protection.

Consultation as a first step

The consultation is expected to begin in the spring and will involve a broad range of stakeholders, from sports organisations to representatives of the gambling industry. At the same time, the government has emphasised that the current sponsorship agreements are not illegal.

Even so, it views the high visibility of these brands as problematic because it can steer players towards unregulated sites operating outside the oversight of British authorities. A potential ban is intended to limit that effect.

Part of a broader fight against the illicit market

The proposed measure fits into the British government's broader strategy to combat illegal gambling. In January, a special working group called the Illegal Gambling Taskforce was launched, bringing together technology and payments companies such as Google, Mastercard, TikTok and Visa.

Its aim is to limit the advertising of illegal operators on social networks, block payment flows to illegal platforms and strengthen coordination among regulators.

Sponsorship rules are tightening

The debate comes at a time when it has already been decided that gambling sponsorship on the front of Premier League shirts will be banned from the end of the 2025/2026 season. Other forms of promotion, however, remain possible - for example branding on sleeves or on stadium LED boards.

The market is gradually adapting. Some operators, including Bet365, are already looking for alternative routes, such as partnerships with competitions rather than individual clubs.

What this means for the market

If the ban is adopted, it would represent a major intervention in the current sponsorship model in sport. It would restrict access to fans for unlicensed brands while strengthening the position of regulated operators.

From a regulatory perspective, this would be another step towards a more closed and tightly controlled market. From a business perspective, it signals that the space for grey-area sponsorship models is narrowing rapidly.

BRUSSELS IS CONSIDERING AN EU-WIDE TAX ON ONLINE GAMBLING. TENS OF BILLIONS OF EUROS ARE AT STAKE

In Brussels, a proposal to introduce an EU-wide tax on online gambling is gaining momentum. The initiative, backed by European Parliament Vice-President Victor Negrescu, could fundamentally reshape the way the online betting and gaming sector is taxed across the EU27. If adopted, it would represent one of the most significant interventions in member states' fiscal autonomy in the area of gambling.

A new “own resource” for the EU budget

The proposal aims to introduce an EU levy on the profits of online gambling operators. The proceeds would go directly into the EU budget, particularly to support education, skills development and programmes for young people.



According to the proposal's supporters, the current EU budget is insufficient to meet growing ambitions in education and social policy. The online gambling tax is therefore being presented as a new “own resource” for the Union, without increasing direct contributions from member states.

Another argument is the significant fragmentation of national tax regimes. In some countries, profits from online gambling are taxed at around five percent; in others, rates approach forty percent. According to supporters, this divergence creates competitive imbalances within the internal market and encourages companies to locate their headquarters in lower-tax jurisdictions while serving customers across the EU.

Internal estimates cited in Parliament suggest that online gambling and betting generated around EUR 130 billion in 2022, and that the market may now be approaching EUR 200 billion, with annual growth of around five percent. According to supporters, even a 1% EU tax could generate tens of billions of euros per year for the budget.

It clashes with the tax sovereignty of member states

At the same time, implementing such a measure would mark a fundamental move towards fiscal harmonisation in an area that has so far remained fully within the competence of member states. Unlike VAT, where there is partial harmonisation, the taxation of gambling has remained an exclusively national matter.

Moreover, the European Parliament does not itself have the power to introduce taxes. Any new EU tax instrument would have to be approved unanimously by all 27 member states. Countries with significant exposure to online gambling would therefore have an effective veto.

Even so, the debate itself signals a shift in thinking at EU level: online gambling is no longer seen only as a regulated activity, but increasingly as a potential structural source of financing for European policies.

Double taxation and pressure on margins

For operators, the key question is whether the new EU tax would run alongside national levies or be coordinated with them. If it were simply added on top of existing taxes, it would significantly increase the sector's overall tax burden.

A number of important questions remain open: whether the EU levy would be tax-deductible at national level, what its tax base would be (gross gaming revenue, profit or another metric), how it would interact with corporate income tax, and whether collection would be carried out by EU institutions or national authorities.

In a highly competitive market with tight margins, even a relatively small percentage can have a major impact on profitability. The effects would inevitably be reflected in pricing policy, investment plans and decisions about entering specific markets.

The risk of strengthening the illicit market

Enforcement is a separate and equally important issue. The European online gambling market has long faced the presence of illegal offshore platforms targeting EU customers without the necessary licences.

If the EU tax were to apply only to licensed and regulated entities, it could inadvertently strengthen the competitive advantage of illegal operators. They would bear none of the new costs, while regulated operators would face an additional fiscal burden. Any successful reform would therefore require more coordinated action against the illicit market across member states.

A strategic signal for the entire sector

At the same time, the proposal raises a broader question: should online gambling become a permanent pillar of European policy financing? Politically, the initiative is framed as a tool to support education and skills development, which makes it more attractive.

Regardless of whether the proposal succeeds in the near future, one thing is clear: fiscal and regulatory risk in the online gambling sector is increasingly being shaped not only in national capitals, but also in Brussels. For operators, investors and regulators, that means the European dimension of tax policy can no longer be ignored in strategic planning.