

Competitiveness Council

Ministers adopt first conclusions on gambling

By Sophie Mosca | Friday 10 December 2010

On 10 December, the Competitiveness Council adopted unanimously its first position on gambling in the EU, taking into account EU Court of Justice case law that helps map out a sector that remains virtually a legal vacuum.

This issue was a priority for the Belgian Council Presidency, which managed to build a consensus based on the work of past Presidencies. The conclusions concern the role of national public authorities in terms of supervising gambling services. The Council is “aware that member states face different cross-border problems and agrees that progress is possible to deal with them”. It also welcomes the European Commission’s announcement of a major consultation on online gambling in the internal market, which will allow in-depth discussion of the issues raised.

The ministers also agreed for the first time to work on practical measures to improve cross-border cooperation between national authorities given the cross-border nature of the different questions related to gambling and betting, if need be with third countries. The internal market information system could become a useful tool to facilitate such administrative cooperation, suggest the conclusions.

The 27 ministers also acknowledged the contribution of state lotteries and lotteries approved by the competent public authorities. The Council recognises their usefulness and agrees that “their specific role should be taken into account in discussions at European level”.

This consensus represents an important step forward for the future discussions at EU level, which will be steered by a green paper due out in February 2011.

The European Gaming and Betting Association (EGBA) welcomed the conclusions. “This is a first. Such conclusions would have been unimaginable a year ago. The EGBA congratulates the Belgian Presidency for its relentless work and this remarkable result,” declared its Secretary-General, Sigrid Ligné, who fully supports the Commission in its effort to deliver the green paper as soon as possible.

European Lotteries, the association of state-run lotteries, also said it was “delighted” with EU support for the public utility model used by some of its members and recognition of their contribution of around €20 billion to European society. Its President, Friedrich Stickler, stated that “after the massive support we received from the European Parliament last year, these Council conclusions are another crucial step towards protecting this model”.

The conclusions are available at www.europolitics.info > Search = 284546

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