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Promoting a prevention policy against gambling addiction and combating cybercrime related to on-line betting and gambling

Motion for a resolution¹

tabled by Mr Laurent BÉTEILLE and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

The development of a considerable amount of online gambling and betting on the Internet presents genuine challenges, in terms of both public health and the fight against organised crime.

Gambling addiction, or pathological gambling, is believed to affect between 2% and 7% of adults in developed countries. Defined by psychiatrists as an impulsive disorder (DSM-IV), the addiction more specifically concerns online gamblers. According to a British study, 74% of online betters are thought to be compulsive gamblers. Apart from the facilities offered by the Web (anonymity, "virtualisation" and availability), there is a real absence of any oversight by operators. The available studies on this phenomenon reveal, in addition, the extent of convergence between various addictions, whereby the pathological gambler has clear tendencies towards alcoholism, nicotine addiction or drug addiction. The social consequences of such behaviour must not be brushed aside either: ethical, relational and personal failures often sanction such excessive behaviour. For instance, 20% of French compulsive gamblers ultimately commit money-related offences.

Apart from individual difficulties, the development of online gambling is helping to create new forms of delinquency. In addition to cases of rigged betting, which are regularly exposed in the media and were recently denounced by the Parliamentary Assembly in its Resolution 1602 (2008) on the need to preserve the European sports model, we should also mention electronic attacks on gambling sites that are carried out illegally using the threat of infection by a computer virus, or money laundering operations via online casinos.

National legislation in this field has not been harmonised at European level and generally appears unsuited to the emergence of the Internet phenomenon. Also, the total liberalisation of the sector, including horse race betting, as advocated by the European Commission and supported by the European Court of Justice (Gambelli judgment of 6 November 2003), is expected to worsen the excesses already observable in the 27 EU member states.

Consequently, the Assembly requests the introduction of a pan-European strategy in the field of online betting and gambling, backed up by a regulatory authority in each member state. The latter would be specifically mandated to grant licences to websites, which should abide by precise terms and conditions, in particular by requiring identification of the owners and shareholders of the website and through an effective filtering and control mechanism.

1. Referred to the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, for report at the Standing Committee: Reference No. 3478 (29th Sitting, 29 September 2008).



The Assembly also advocates adaptation of the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (ETS No. 185) in order to take account of offences specifically related to online gambling: electronic attacks, bet rigging and money laundering.

The Assembly would also recommend the definition of national policies for the prevention of gambling addiction and the implementation of remedial treatments, going beyond mutual-aid associative movements of the "Gamblers Anonymous" type. Appropriate hospital structures must be promoted in each state, along the lines of those designed to combat drug addiction or alcoholism.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed²:

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