



PRESS RELEASE

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Spanish Presidency issues gambling report

RGA calls for meaningful action to make national laws EU compliant

The Spanish Presidency of the EU submitted a progress report on gambling in the EU to the Competitiveness Council meeting of 25-26 May. The RGA welcomes the Spanish Presidency's efforts to produce a balanced document, but argues strongly that the Council's work in this area should not prevent the European Commission from vigorously defending the rules of the Internal Market where the gambling laws of many Member States are clearly non-compliant.

The Spanish Presidency's progress report focuses on the definition of illegal gambling, enforcement measures, transitional periods in the context of new licensing regimes in national markets and public campaigns against so-called illegal gambling.

Unlike previous Presidencies, the Spanish authorities consulted the main stakeholders (including the RGA), whose views are presented in a separate document but not in the progress report itself. Although the RGA does not necessarily agree with all the opinions expressed in the progress report, it notes with satisfaction that the document explicitly mentions the requirement that national legislation must comply with EU law.

This report continues the work initiated by France in the Council in the 2nd half of 2008. The RGA welcomes a debate on gambling within the Council or in any other forums and the exchange of knowledge that it entails. Nevertheless, this debate (or any other in the context of a possible European Commission's green paper on this subject) should not be used as an excuse by Member States to maintain or introduce legislation that is in breach of EU law. The Commission, should make this clear and fulfil its duty as Guardian of the Treaties by pushing on with the pending gambling-related infringements that have been opened against several Member States.

Clive Hawkswood, RGA Chief Executive, said: *We understand the wish of EU countries to consider these issues collectively and we are grateful to have had the opportunity to express our views to the Spanish Presidency. However, we continue to question the added value of this debate in the Council given the lack of progress in promoting fair competition within EU markets. All of the valid concerns expressed about consumer protection can be fully addressed through appropriate regulation, but far too much of the reports so far have really been about protecting domestic markets and suppliers from competition. This would simply be unacceptable if it was any other industry, but unfortunately where gambling is concerned many Member States are more than willing to disregard the rules of the Internal Market. They will continue to do so until the European Commission takes action to stop them*’.

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The RGA represents the world’s largest licensed, and stock market-listed remote gambling companies. It provides the industry with a single voice on all issues of importance to regulators, legislators, and key decision makers around the world.

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