



Press Release

European sports welcome strong European Parliament Report on integrity and commercial exploitation of competitions

The Sports Rights Owners Coalition (SROC) warmly welcomes yesterday's adoption of the Creutzmann Report on Online Gambling by the European Parliament. The Report responds to the Green Paper on online gambling in the Internal Market adopted by the European Commission earlier this year.

The Parliament has reaffirmed by a large majority the positions it already outlined in the 2009 Schaldemose Report¹ on the same topic. MEPs have now stated across two Parliamentary mandates that European efforts are needed to combat match-fixing and to ensure that sports competition organisers are appropriately remunerated for the commercial exploitation of their events by betting operators, in the same way that broadcasters, advertisers, sponsors or any other commercial partners pay for their association with these events.

Parliament Calls for Commission and Member States Actions

In the Report adopted today, the Parliament notably "Reaffirms its position that sports bets are a form of commercial use of sporting competitions" and "recommends that sporting competitions should be protected from any unauthorised commercial use, notably by recognising the property rights of sports event organisers, not only in order to secure a fair financial return for the benefit of all levels of professional and amateur sport, but also as a means of strengthening the fight against sports fraud, particularly match-fixing"

Calling on the European Commission and individual EU Member States to take up the Parliament's demands, SROC Chairman Nick Bitel stated: "The Parliament has once again given a clear political message to the Commission and Member States, and to ourselves and the betting industry, that a coordinated European action is needed. The Commission must now follow up on its Green Paper with concrete legislative proposals in 2012 ensuring the protection of the integrity of our competitions as well as binding mechanisms allowing for a fair financial return".

Referring to what those future measures should include, Mr Bitel pointed towards the text of the Creutzmann Report, where the Parliament "Stresses that the conclusion of legally binding agreements between organisers of sports competitions and online gambling operators would ensure a more balanced relationship between them."

This preventive measure needs to be coupled with strong deterrents in the form of criminal sanctions according to SROC, whose members further endorsed the Parliament's position that there should be a common European approach.

16 November 2011

¹ 2008/2215(INI) - <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?language=EN&reference=A6-0064/2009>



Background

European Recognition of the Property Rights of Sports Competition Organisers

The Creutzmann Report closely follows the adoption of the Fisas Report on “The Future European Dimension for Sport” by the European Parliament’s Culture & Education Committee², which is due to be voted in Plenary in December. The Fisas Report also addresses these important issues, and “Calls on the Commission and the Member States to recognise the property rights of the organisers of sports competitions with regard to the events they organize”.

In its Preliminary Ruling in the QC Leisure case³, the Court of Justice of the European Union clearly states that Member States have the right to grant sports organisations with specific rights and protection which are equivalent to those afforded under copyright laws.

About SROC

SROC was created six years ago, bringing together around 40 major international and national sporting organisations. Together its members represent Europe’s most popular sports and competitions. The purpose of SROC is to share ideas and information, and to prepare and present common positions to the EU and International Treaty Organisations. SROC members seek proper recognition of the value of sport and effective protection for their rights in terms of digital piracy, counterfeiting, and the regulated and state-controlled opening of online sports betting markets.

For more information:

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² 2011/2087(INI)

³ C-403/08 Points 100-104 - <http://curia.europa.eu/jurisp/cgi-bin/gettext.pl?where=&lang=en&num=79888995C19080403&doc=T&ouvert=T&seance=ARRET>