

PRESS RELEASE

European lotteries, policy makers and stakeholders are key partners in the fight against match fixing

Gambling experts, sports commentators, athletes and EU decision-makers gathered in Brussels today for the **first European Lotteries Sustainable Gambling Conference in the European Parliament**. The event, hosted by **MEPs Hannu Takkula** and **Santiago Fisas Aixelà** in the European Parliament, aims to address where things stand on match-fixing in Europe and discuss the solutions to it while highlighting the role of lotteries – the historic partners in the EU Member States – in promoting the highest sports integrity standards and ensuring fair sports betting.

“While we must remember that most sport is absolutely positive, attacks upon the integrity of sport have increased in recent years”, declared **MEP Hannu Takkula (Finland, ALDE)** when opening the conference: *“As policy makers, we have made good progress, including tackling match fixing and illegal gambling; yet more needs to be done. We need seamless teamwork and all stakeholders, including governments, sports organisations and sports betting operators need to recognise that it is only collectively that we can build a credible defense against this threat.”*

The gross revenue of lotteries across the EU reached over €30 billion in 2011, whilst their overall contribution to society amounted to more than €23 billion in the EU indicated **Patrice Muller, from London Economics**. Lotteries contribute to their national Treasury, but also to sports and other good causes. For example, a shift of 20% of consumer spending on lottery products to other gambling operators represents *“a clear net loss in contribution to society of approximately €4.6 billion per year”*.

According to **Pascal Boniface, founding director of IRIS** (Paris-based Institute for International and Strategic Relations) who presented a White Paper on match fixing, *“regulation and supervision of the operators themselves is key. Poorly regulated environment creates higher risks of match fixing and are fertile grounds for fraud and money laundering”*. His recommendations include improving procedures for identifying winners and requiring betting operators to draw up suspicious transaction reports.

Panelists discussed concrete solutions to match fixing. **Pierre Delsaux**, the European Commission Deputy Director-General for Internal Market and Services, said that *“the Commission is actively engaged in the ongoing negotiations of the Council of Europe on a Convention on the fight against the manipulation of sport results. This is an important step as increased cooperation at European and international level of public and private organs*

(sport organisations, betting operators and supervisors, police and judicial authorities) is key to fight against match-fixing”.

MEP Santiago Fisas Aixelà (Spain, EPP) underlined: *“any measure at EU level should take the ‘subsidiarity’ principle into account, respect each Member State’s rules and the autonomy of the different structures’ governing sports.”* However, the EU could have “added value” and help promoting good practices and complement the actions of Member States in areas such as the fight against doping and corruption in the world of sport, “match fixing” practices, promotion of voluntary sport activities and programmes of social inclusion through sport or sustainable financing of grassroots sport.

Declan Hill, world-wide known expert on the matter, insisted on the threats that sport is facing: *“We in sport are at war. The very nature and existence of our passion, our ideals and our values in sport are in danger. We must understand this modern-day phenomenon of globalised match-fixing in order to fight it properly.”*

EL President Friedrich Stickler concluded: *“Sport in Europe is threatened by wide and deep networks working with criminal organisations and operating with complex techniques. The time has come for all parties involved: sport, national governments, international organisations, the law-abiding gambling operators and the police forces to intensify our cooperation to fight match-fixing. EL and its members are the historic partners of sport, we have always been leading in the fight against match-fixing and I now call for the establishment of a specific agency that deals with these matters.”*

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Notes to the editor

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About The European Lotteries

The European Lotteries (EL) is the European umbrella organisation of national lotteries operating games of chance for the public benefit. EL has members from 48 European countries including all 28 EU Member States. The association’s EU members contribute more than 20 billion EUR p.a. to the state budgets and the funding of sport, culture, social projects, research and other causes of general interest. Unlike many commercial online gambling operators, EL members only offer gambling and betting services in the jurisdictions in which they are licensed by the respective national government.

EL Members: <https://www.european-lotteries.org/list/member-lotteries>