

# **Sports Betting Report provides a factual base to inform the Commercial and Integrity Debate**

Brussels and London, 15 September 2014: In the week when Ministers from around 50 countries are expected to sign a new match-fixing Convention in Switzerland, the regulated betting industry, represented by the ABB, EGBA, ESSA and RGA has published a report entitled Sports Betting: Commercial and Integrity Issues to help inform the wider debate. The author Jason Foley-Train updates the 2010 report he produced while on secondment (to the betting industry) from the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to explore not just match-fixing but the associated commercial and integrity matters that have gained prominence in the interim period.

The report is a comprehensive and evidence-based resource and analysis that provides a vital insight into the important symbiotic commercial and integrity relationship between the sporting and betting sectors. It also highlights how the growing global sports betting market has led policymakers within national and transnational institutions to be drawn into a complex commercial and integrity debate.

Key findings from the report include:

- \* Sports betting rights are not an effective mechanism for financial distribution to sport and do not improve integrity.
- \* Highlights that a report by the Asser Institute for the European Commission has widely criticised the “right to consent to bets” model, detailing numerous practical and operational flaws in the system, along with a number of important legal obstacles within the EU.

\* The mutually beneficial commercial association between betting and sport has continued to grow with sponsorship and advertising becoming a significant source of funding for sport.

\* Regulated operators continue to invest significantly in sports broadcasts both in land-based facilities and through new interactive streaming channels as a means to support new betting product innovations and to create greater interaction and engagement with their customers.

\* Sports bodies are also achieving payments from licensing specialised data companies which are then selling real-time data, sports information and statistics to regulated betting operators to inform and drive the growing market in live (in-play) betting on sporting events.

\* Assertions that the opening of gambling markets to competition involving regulated private operators will lead to a reduction in lottery revenues and thereby money allocated to good causes does not appear to be corroborated by the evidence of a number of markets.

\* An increasing amount of independent research shows that corrupters primarily seek to defraud unregulated operators and utilise mainstream betting products with high levels of market liquidity to try and mask their illicit activities, rather than new betting products.

\* The proposal that new markets, such as in-play betting, offered by regulated operators should be restricted or prohibited on sporting integrity grounds does not, given the weight of independent data, appear to be a policy generated from any firm evidence base.

\* Defrauding regulated betting operators is fraught with significant difficulties; sophisticated detection and consumer identification systems, restricted stakes, markets closed and bets voided in suspicious cases, mean that there is limited

scope for large-scale profit.

\* Significant governance issues remain concerning the enforcement of sporting rules and sanctions, corruption within sport itself, along with a widespread lack of player salary payments which is allowing organised crime to exploit the financial vulnerabilities of players.

Clive Hawkswood, RGA Chief Executive, stated that: "Unfortunately the sports betting integrity debate is too often driven by either the ill informed or those looking to gain a commercial advantage. I very much hope that this report will go a long way towards educating opinion formers of the facts of the situation, strengthening their knowledge base and ultimately providing a foundation for progress."

Khalid Ali, ESSA Secretary General, stated that: "The report corroborates much of what the regulated betting sector has been advancing for over a decade; attacks on the integrity of sport are principally directed by organized criminal groups seeking to exploit the vulnerabilities of sports' own participants often from poor governance. Regulated betting operators are actually the potential victims of such fraud, immediately questioning the rationale behind the 'sports right' approach, which has been widely criticised in a recent report for the European Commission as being inefficient and having numerous practical and operational flaws, along with a number of legal obstacles within the EU."