

European Gambling Briefing 2008 Promises Lively Debate

Lively debates are expected at the fourth European Gambling Briefing (EGB), taking place from 13 – 14 May 2008 in Amsterdam.

EGB is already established as an essential part of the gaming events calendar, focusing on legal and regulatory issues for both the online and land-based industries. The conference will address the practical ramifications of these issues for operators and suppliers building an international gambling business.

A key debate will take place between Christofer Fjellner MEP, Sweden and Joel Hasse Ferreira MEP, Portugal on day one of the conference. These two politicians take a different approach to global gambling laws and visitors can expect an interesting and lively exchange of views. Whilst both support a socially responsible attitude, Fjellner believes that many EU jurisdictions are taking action which results in the violation of the freedom to provide services.

Fjellner's appearance is particularly timely as Sweden, normally criticised by the European Commission for its stance on protectionism of its State Monopoly in gambling, has recently made a surprise legal u-turn. It has recognised that a Swedish law regarding online gambling advertising may well contravene European legislation.

The gaming industry continues to make the headlines in other areas, as in another recent development the French Tennis Federation is attempting to control betting outside stadiums during May's French Open. This move, if successful, could set new precedents for case law in the industry, and is being monitored with great interest by lawyers and operators alike.

The gaming industry is frequently in the consumer press in a less than positive light and Bwin has confirmed that Karin Klein, Head of Regulatory Affairs for the EU, will be a panelist at the EGB conference discussing how the gambling industry can tackle this poor public perception and what operators and lobbyists can do to improve gambling's image overall.

These and other key issues will shape debate at EGB, which will once again deliver serious, senior-level analysis and bring together the most influential politicians, regulators, lawyers and operators from Europe and beyond to tackle the many debates concerning the industry. Some of the topics under discussion include cross-border competition, the role of the European Union and European Court of Justice and opportunities in emerging European territories such as Asia, South America and Eastern Europe.

As well as the MEPs and Bwin's Klein, speakers include Edward Feehan from the European Commission, regulators from Norway, Denmark, Gibraltar, Latvia and Alderney and lawyers from key jurisdictions such as the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, France, Italy and Spain. These speakers will be contributing to the most comprehensive analysis of the legal and business issues shaping European gaming.

As well as high-level content, participants will enjoy plenty of networking opportunities, with a welcome drinks reception on 12 May (sponsored by Dutch law firm Van mens Wisselink) and a gala party on 13 May hosted by Holland Casino. The event looks set to exceed last year's total of 150 attendees.