

Stanley Leisure says EU Court rules in its favour in Italian betting

London – Stanley Leisure PLC said the European Court of Justice has ruled in favour of its overseas betting operation Stanleybet International in a case challenging restrictions on betting in Italy.

The ruling in the so-called ‚Gambelli‘ case upholds an opinion submitted by Advocate General Alber on March 13 and „departs dramatically from the established restrictive history within the European Union on gaming and betting services, and could have far-reaching consequences for betting in the European Union,“ the company said.

The court ruled that Italian legislation is contrary to articles 43 and 49 of the EC Treaty. The legislation punishes as a criminal offence all collection, acceptance, booking and forwarding of sports bet proposals within or from Italy, except in the presence of a licence or authorisation issued by the authorities.

The Gambelli case was referred to the European Court by an Italian court following a criminal action brought against a number of agents affiliated to Stanleybet International.

In its ruling, the European Court said: „Where a company established in a member state (such as Stanley) pursues the activity of collecting bets through the intermediary of an organisation of agencies established in another member state (such as the defendants in the main proceedings), any restrictions on the activities of those agencies constitute obstacles to the freedom of establishment.“

John Whittaker, managing director of Stanley Leisure’s betting

division, said today's ruling: „Does us justice and certainly rewards our efforts. We now hope that the Italian Government will soon enact domestic legislation compliant with the ruling of the court“.

Whittaker said the Gambelli case concerns „a bricks and mortar business which should not be confused with internet betting operations.“

He added: „Because of our unique technology and experience in this type of business we are ideally placed to export our model into other EU countries.“

The company said the practical effect of this judgement ought to be the opening up of the Italian market place to cross-border sports betting services.