



Tackling
Gambling
Stigma

International comparison of gambling advertising regulation

Prepared for the Coalition Against Gambling Ads

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About

Vita

Vita is a social research agency that specialises in untangling intricate issues with solutions designed to fit the contours of human experience. Our core purpose is to assist organisations in comprehending and resolving complex challenges, thereby making a tangible difference in the lives of the people they serve.

Our approach revolves around collaboration, where we bring together those seeking insights and those directly affected by the issue. However, we don't simply stop at analysis. Our ultimate goal is to translate these insights into actionable steps that drive meaningful and lasting change.

At Vita, we don't just offer advice – we're your dedicated partners in navigating challenges, communicating complex issues, and guiding you every step of the way. Our commitment extends beyond data; it's about enabling genuine, human-focused transformation. We produce human-shaped solutions to human problems.

Tackling Gambling Stigma

Tackling Gambling Stigma is a not-for-profit organisation set up by the people at Vita, to focus specifically on the issues of tackling the stigma and discrimination around gambling harm. We do this by sharing the real-life stories of those affected – because evidence shows that social contact is core to tackling any stigma or discrimination. We use best practices in research to gather and analyse lived experiences. This material is used to create a multi-media website where those affected, the public and professionals can learn about gambling harm by reading, listening, or watching people share their experiences. Our team has lived experience of addictions and being affected by the addictions of others.

Author profiles

Clare Wyllie

Clare is the director of research at TGS and Vita. She specialises in ethnographic and participatory action research. She has also worked in strategy and policy, intervention design and evaluation and communications. She uses this experience to make sure research is useful for action and to help an organisation develop solutions. She has worked in the public and charity sector in South Africa and the UK. This includes Agenda for Gender Equality, Institute for Democracy in South Africa, the Commission on Gender Equality, Human Rights Commission and Government Communication and Information System, within the South

African Presidency. In the UK she was Head of Policy and Research at Samaritans, before moving to strategy development for the Care Quality Commission, the regulator for health and social care. She was Director of Research and Evaluation at GambleAware. Since then, she has worked alongside people harmed by gambling to develop evidence and policy for regulatory reform. She is undertaking research on the global digital gambling ecosystem. Clare has a BA in Psychology, Masters in Genders Studies and Masters in Research Methods, from the LSE.

Alexander Kallman

Alexander is the Managing Director at TGS and Vita. With over a decade of experience in policy and strategy and leading complex research projects he uses his experience to answer the “so what” questions and creating mutually beneficial partnerships with key stakeholders. He takes pride in enabling the team and organisations to create the change it wants to see. He has an MA from King’s College London focusing on the intersection of politics and law.

Declaration of interests

This report was funded by the Coalition Against Gambling Ads, on the understanding that they do not control the content. Control rests solely with Tackling Gambling Stigma.

Clare Wyllie and Alexander Kallman have previously worked for GambleAware. They have also provided evidence and expertise for the Clean Up Gambling Campaign for regulatory reform.

Summary

In an era of increasing digitalisation and global connectivity, gambling companies make extensive use of data-driven advertising, marketing and sponsorship. From long-standing forms such as television commercials to newer forms such as social media content and personalised marketing, gambling advertising plays a significant role in shaping public perception and behaviour and contributing to harm from gambling. However, the regulatory response to this evidence and the issues posed by the evolving forms of gambling advertising takes varies significantly from country to country. This project aims to compare different regulatory approaches to gambling advertising, shedding light on their strategies. Specifically, it looks at placement and content restrictions across seven countries.

By examining these regulatory frameworks, we seek to provide an understanding of how different countries address the challenges posed by gambling advertisements. Through this analysis, we hope to contribute to informed policy discussions in Great Britain and promote evidence-based decision-making in this domain.

Main findings

We distilled three main approaches underlying gambling advertising regulation. While countries vary in the specifics of how these approaches are realised, the three categories provide a useful way of considering the underlying rationale and implications of different regulatory strategies.

1. **Blanket ban/severe restrictions** (Example country - Italy): A few countries adopt a stringent approach by imposing a blanket ban or severe restrictions on gambling advertising. In this model, advertisements related to gambling products are strictly prohibited across various media channels. This approach seeks to minimise exposure and not allow public demand for gambling products to be spurred while also protecting vulnerable populations. By limiting advertising visibility, the regulation aims to reduce the overall demand for gambling services as well as mitigate potential harm associated with participating in gambling by not allowing gambling companies to encourage or induce consumers to gamble more.
2. **Marketing to participants** (Example country - Belgium): Some countries take the approach of prohibiting general public advertising, including personalised advertising via email, post, SMS and social networks. However, companies can market to those already interested in or participating in gambling with some degree

of control. This strategy does not allow gambling companies to stimulate public demand for gambling while still allowing marketing to those who actively seek out gambling products. The goal is to protect the broader population while acknowledging the preferences of those already interested in gambling and that companies are competing for such consumers. However, this may contribute to the concentration of risk among those who participate in gambling.

3. **Marketing to all** (Example country - Great Britain): Great Britain follows a different model that enables companies to stimulate general demand for gambling products as well as encouragement and inducement for those who participate and only introduces significant restrictions when an individual is already experiencing harm. Initially, widespread and targeted advertising is permitted. However, once an individual experiences severe gambling harm, targeted advertising ceases, although their exposure continues due to the extensive gambling advertising in general.

Scope and country selection

Given the nature of our project—a small-scale research endeavour—investigating every country’s regulatory framework would be impractical/unfeasible. Therefore, we narrowed our scope to a manageable set of countries for a more in-depth examination. We selected countries purposively based on the following:

1. **Diverse Regulatory Approaches:** Our primary objective was to explore different regulatory approaches to gambling advertising. To achieve this, we selected countries with varying strategies. By examining a diverse set of nations, we aimed to gain insights into the spectrum of approaches—from strict bans to more permissive models.
2. **Countries at the Forefront of Change:** We focused on countries that are actively shaping the landscape of gambling advertising regulation. These nations are implementing new policies or revising existing ones. By studying their approaches, we can identify emerging trends and ideas for good practice.
3. **Language Accessibility:** Our research was limited to publicly available information in English.

It is outside this report's scope to judge the effectiveness of different and specific regulatory provisions across countries. For instance, while most countries stipulate that gambling advertising should not appeal to young people, empirical evidence from the United Kingdom and Australia suggests that children do find such advertisements appealing and exhibit

high brand awareness.¹ Rather, we present factual information and observed trends regarding the principles and mechanisms involved in public policies on gambling advertising.

¹ See e.g., Thomas, S., Van Schalkwyk, M. C., Daube, M., Pitt, H., McGee, D., & McKee, M. (2023). Protecting children and young people from contemporary marketing for gambling. *Health Promotion International*, 38(2), daac194.

Overview of countries' gambling advertising regulation

COUNTRY	SPORT SPONSORSHIP	ONLINE ADVERTISING	TV & RADIO	SOCIAL MEDIA	TARGETED ADS	PUBLIC POSTERS	TV ADS DURING SPORTS EVENTS	INDUCEMENTS*
BELGIUM	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
ITALY	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
SPAIN	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
GERMANY	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
NETHERLANDS	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
AUSTRALIA	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
GREAT BRITAIN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓	ALLOWED
✗	BANNED WITH CAVEATS
✗	BANNED

* Inducements refer to sign-up bonuses and bonuses sent to inactive players.

Great Britain

The Gambling Act 2005 gives the Secretary of State powers to restrict gambling advertising in any manner. Instead of using these powers, gambling advertising regulation is based almost entirely on voluntary action, self-regulation and codes developed by gambling industry bodies, advertising industry bodies and now sporting bodies, with some additional enforcement by the Gambling Commission.

The regulatory framework includes the UK Code of Non-broadcast Advertising and Direct & Promotional Marketing (CAP Code) and the UK Code of Broadcast Advertising (BCAP Code). It includes the codes of the Gambling Industry Group for Responsible Gambling. The regulator makes adhering to these codes a license condition.

The UK is also developing a new sports sponsorship code for gambling as part of the White Paper on gambling regulation. This code will be common to all sports, but it will 'incorporate flexibility to accommodate the material differences between sports'.

Content restrictions:

- **Misleading Advertising:** Advertisements must not contain any misleading or false claims.
- **Promotional Marketing:** Any promotions or offers made in gambling advertisements must be clear, fair, and not misleading.²
- **Appeal to Children and Young People:** The content of these advertisements should not appeal strongly to children and young people. Advertisements must not feature individuals under the age of 25 or contain content that might appeal to children or young people.²

Exaggerated Benefits: Advertisements must not exaggerate the potential benefits of gambling. This includes any claims about winning, financial gains, or any other benefits that are not realistic or guaranteed.²

- **Targeting Vulnerable Populations:** Advertisements must not target vulnerable populations. This includes children, young people, and individuals who may be more susceptible to the harms of gambling.²

² <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/licensees-and-businesses/guide/advertising-marketing-rules-and-regulations>

- Use of Sports and Reality TV Stars: The UK has banned the use of advertising featuring celebrities that can appeal to children and young people, such as top-flight footballers and other sports personalities, as well as reality TV and social media stars.³

Additionally, the Gambling Commission has worked with the Betting and Gaming Council (BGC) to update its advertising code following the publication of the White Paper. Key changes include:

- Expanded Safer Gambling Messaging: The BGC has extended its commitment to dedicate at least 20% of all advertising space, including TV, radio, online, and digital media, to safer gambling messages.⁴
- Age Restrictions: Sponsored or paid-for digital media ads must be targeted to consumers aged 25 and above.⁴

Placement Restrictions:

- Location Restrictions: Advertisements must not be placed near schools or other places where they are likely to be seen by children.⁵
- Online Restrictions: Online advertising is not to be targeted at under-18s.⁶
- The industry has agreed to a “whistle-to-whistle” ban on adverts beginning five minutes before pre-watershed live sports events and ending five minutes after. However, this excludes horse and greyhound racing, which are seen as intrinsically linked to gambling.⁷
- Except for bingo and lotteries, gambling products should not be advertised on television before the 9 pm watershed.

Additionally, the White Paper reforms include further controls on the ways inducements are structured, opt-in choices for direct marketing and de-targeting of people experiencing gambling harm online.

³ [Gambling, betting and gaming: Appeal to children - ASA | CAP](#)

⁴ <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/44296/documents/220160/default/>

⁵ <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/licensees-and-businesses/guide/advertising-marketing-rules-and-regulations>

⁶ <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/licensees-and-businesses/guide/advertising-marketing-rules-and-regulations>

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/dec/13/betting-firms-to-ban-pre-watershed-tv-adverts-during-live-sport-events>

Australia

In Australia, many forms of gambling are prohibited, and gambling advertisements cannot promote banned services. This includes online casinos, in-play sports betting,⁸ sports betting services which do not hold an Australian license, and betting on the outcome of a lottery.⁹

- There are content controls aimed at preventing gambling advertisements from appealing to minors, being misleading or socially irresponsible.
- In 2018, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) established restrictions on gambling advertising that apply to both broadcasting and online platforms.
- The restrictions included times when children are most likely to be part of the broadcast audience. The placement of gambling advertisements is restricted between 5.00 am and 8.30 pm.¹⁰
- During this time there is a ban on gambling advertising during play, within breaks in play, and 5 minutes on either side of the coverage of the live sporting event.¹⁰
- No gambling advertising or promotion of odds is permitted from 5 minutes before the published scheduled start of play until 5 minutes after play, including during breaks.¹⁰

Spain

Spain's regulatory framework was established under the Spanish Gambling Act of 2011 and is further detailed in the Royal Decree 958/2020.¹¹ The Royal Decree of the Development of Safer Gaming Environments outlined a range of 30 changes aimed at protecting consumers, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹² The decree has a notable focus on young people aged between 18 and 25, who the ministry says are more vulnerable to messages about gambling.

⁸ According to the current regulations, live bets can only be placed via phone calls.

⁹ [Rules for betting ads and odds | ACMA](#)

¹⁰ [Rules for betting ads and odds | ACMA](#)

¹¹ <https://www.cuatrecasas.com/en/global/art/royal-decree-on-gambling-advertising-published-in-the-official-state-gazette-1>

¹² <https://iclg.com/practice-areas/gambling-laws-and-regulations/spain>

Some of the measures outlined in the decree were overturned on 11 April 2024. The Spanish Constitutional Court found that several items in the Royal Decree 958/2020 needed primary legislation to be implemented and overturned them on those grounds. This decision was not based on the merits of the regulations in the Royal Decree.

Key provisions still in place from the 2020 decree that relate to advertising controls:

- A player will be considered an intensive gambler if they accumulate a net loss of €600 (€200 for those aged under 25) over three consecutive weeks.
- Operators are prohibited from sending promotional material to such intensive players, and they must not include them in VIP programmes.

Key advertising controls from the 2020 decree reversed by the 2024 court ruling:

- TV and Radio Advertising: The law mandated that advertising on TV and radio, including YouTube, be restricted between the hours of 1 am and 5 am. This is now allowed.
- Social Media Advertising: Operator brands could only publish promotional content for their existing social media followers. However, the Supreme Court ruling now allows operators to advertise on social media to all users over the age of 18.
- Promotional Bonuses: Promotional bonuses were prohibited, except if the particular advertising was targeted to verified customers.
- Use of Celebrities: Operators have been prohibited from using celebrities in their advertisements or engaging in sports sponsorships since 2021. The measure banning the appearance of celebrities in gambling promotions has been annulled.
- Advertising in Places Where Lottery Games are Sold: Operators will also be able to advertise in places where lottery games are sold.

Despite these annulments, some significant restrictions still exist around sponsorship. Operators will still be banned from advertising or branding for events, goods, and services that minors could view. They are also barred from sponsoring sporting events or broadcasts or engaging in any sponsorship activities that relate to a sports facility.

Spain has gambling advertising content restrictions to prevent misleading or deceptive practices in gambling, exaggeration of benefits, and appeal to minors and to vulnerable people.^{13,14}

Additionally, the advertising industry self-regulatory organisation Autocontrol provides a Code of Conduct that includes provisions on social responsibility and the protection of minors.^{15,16}

Belgium

Belgium is one of the first countries to ban general advertising of gambling, in 2023 and has urged other jurisdictions to follow.^{17,18}

Justice Minister Vincent Van Quickenborne said in a statement, "And for those who want to get rid of their gambling addiction, the tsunami of gambling advertising is an additional problem."¹⁹

The rules in place restrict gambling advertising across channels and forms, including those on television, social media, radio, direct mail, email, and text messages. Sports sponsorships related to gambling are common in Belgium, but measures are being implemented to phase out most sport stadium sponsorships by 2025 and shirt sponsorships by 2028.

However, the rules do permit operators to advertise to individuals who have shown an interest in gambling. For example, advertising is allowed when consumers actively search for gambling-related content using specific keywords in online search engines. As a result, Belgian gambling operators have significantly increased their investment in search engine advertising since the ban was implemented. Additionally, if a person has explicitly opted in to receive marketing emails or is signed up to the services of a gambling company, then targeted advertising may be permissible under certain conditions. Operators can also continue to advertise on their own platforms, such as their websites and social media accounts, and direct marketing, but they must follow certain guidelines.

¹³ <https://practiceguides.chambers.com/practice-guides/gaming-law-2023/spain/trends-and-developments>

¹⁴ <https://iclg.com/practice-areas/gambling-laws-and-regulations/spain>

¹⁵ Autocontrol is an independent advertising self-regulatory organisation in Spain. It was established in 1995 as a non-profit association. Autocontrol is comprised of advertisers, advertising agencies, media, and professional associations. See <https://www.autocontrol.es> for more information

¹⁶ <https://iclg.com/practice-areas/gambling-laws-and-regulations/spain>

¹⁷ Justitie. Belgisch Staatsblad. Koninklijk Besluit van 27/02/2023 tot bepaling van de nadere regels betreffende de reclame voor de kansspelen. Available at: https://etaamb.openjustice.be/nl/koninklijk-besluit-van-27-februari-2023_n2023030509

¹⁸ Murray S. Irish Examiner. Government urged to consider tougher curbs on gambling advertising. 2023 [cited 2023 Dec 8]. Available at: <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-41092204.html>

¹⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/belgium-bans-gambling-advertising-july-1-2023-03-09/>

While sports sponsorships are being limited, operators can still sponsor amateur sports clubs. In fact, one operator recently announced plans to provide 100 local sports clubs with complimentary jerseys.

Lottery products are not subject to the ban because they are regulated differently, allowing the State Lottery to continue advertising these products.

Italy

In July 2018, the Italian Law Decree No. 87/2018, also known as the Dignity Decree, was adopted. Among its various objectives, the regulation is intended to fight the spread of gambling disorder. Specifically, it introduced the ban on gambling and betting advertising within the Italian legal system.

The prohibition concerns any form of advertising, direct or indirect and in any way carried out on all platforms.

Beyond the conventional forms of advertising, the following types of commercial communications are also considered prohibited if they relate to gambling or betting products. These include, but are not limited to:

- Placement of products within other content
- Distribution of gadgets branded with gaming products
- Hosting events where prizes consist of branded products
- Prize competitions as outlined and qualified by Presidential Decree no. 430 of 26 October 2001
- Advertising within editorial content
- Both direct and indirect advertising conducted by influencers

Furthermore, sponsorships of events, activities, shows, programmes, products, or services, along with other forms of communication containing promotional content, are also prohibited. This includes visual and auditory references that highlight calls to action associated with gaming and/or betting.

Netherlands

The Netherlands Gambling Authority (KSA) is the regulatory body that oversees gambling activities in the country.

Online gambling was officially legalised in the Netherlands in October 2021.

- On July 1, 2023, the Netherlands implemented a ban on most forms of gambling advertisements. The ban covers all radio and television commercials.
- Advertising in public places like billboards, bus shelters, cafes, and gaming venues themselves, including casinos and slot parlours, is also prohibited.²⁰
- The Dutch Cabinet has announced plans to require gambling companies to ensure that all advertising for online gambling services is only seen by people 24 years of age or older and that people vulnerable to gambling addiction do not see the adverts.²¹
- Advertisements must not strongly appeal to children or young people, especially when reflecting or being associated with youth culture. Advertisements must not incorporate cameos of young people's favourite celebrities or individuals who appear to be minors. It is illegal to aim advertisements at vulnerable groups.

Germany

In Germany, the primary regulation is the federal Interstate Treaty on Gambling 2021 (ISTG 2021), which came into force on July 1, 2021.²² This treaty allows private operators to apply for licenses to offer sports betting, virtual slot machines, and online poker². However, online casino games were subject to separate laws of the individual federal states.²³

Since January 1, 2023, all responsibilities for online licenses in Germany, as well as enforcement measures, have been passed from all federal states to the newly formed Joint Gambling Supervisory Authority (GGL) in Halle.²⁴

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ <https://cms-lawnow.com/en/ealerts/2021/10/netherlands-issues-new-guidance-on-advertising-and-online-gambling>

²² <https://iclg.com/practice-areas/gambling-laws-and-regulations/germany>

²³ <https://www.taylorwessing.com/en/insights-and-events/insights/2022/10/german-gaming-law--update-2021-2022>

²⁴ <https://www.taylorwessing.com/en/insights-and-events/insights/2022/10/german-gaming-law--update-2021-2022>

The ISTG 2021 introduced significant restrictions on gambling advertising.²⁵

- Advertising that motivates “non-players” to participate or encourages excessive gambling is prohibited. Additionally, while targeted advertising is allowed, it must be done in a way that does not encourage non-gamblers to start gambling or existing players to gamble excessively.²³
- Non-time-controlled outdoor advertising, including advertising in facilities that are not only accessible to a certain or definable group of people (with the exception of sports facilities), is prohibited.²⁶
- Advertising through phone calls, SMS, or similar services is generally not allowed unless there’s an ongoing active relationship with the player.
- Individualised advertising requires the recipient’s prior consent to receive the ad and for the advertiser to check the exclusion system.
- Revenue-sharing advertising models, like affiliate links, are not allowed.
- From 6 am to 9 pm, ads for virtual slot machines, online poker, and online casino games are prohibited on broadcast and online platforms.
- Advertisements for sports betting on a specific event are not allowed on the same channel immediately before or during the live broadcast of the event.
- Live sports event coverage cannot be combined with ads for betting on that event, except for live score displays on a betting provider’s website.
- Active athletes or sports officials cannot be used in sports betting ads.
- General sports team sponsorships, such as on jerseys, are still allowed.
- Advertising for free online casino games and virtual slot machine games, influencer marketing, advertising by streamers, and affiliate advertising with partners who also advertise illegal gambling are banned.²⁷

²⁵ <https://www.gamblinginsider.com/magazine/277/germany-new-gambling-advertising-rules>

²⁶ <https://www.gamblinginsider.com/magazine/277/germany-new-gambling-advertising-rules>

²⁷ <https://casinobeats.com/2023/06/27/ggl-german-gambling-advertising-rules/>

- There are exemptions for most lotteries and some forms of horse betting.

In addition, advertising that “trivialises gambling” or “contains baseless claims” that suggest gambling can raise social standing, provide an employment alternative, or portray unrealistic winning odds is prohibited.

Any advertising or message aimed towards minors or that might be of appeal to them is prohibited. This includes any advertisements that incorporate cameos of young people’s favourite celebrities or individuals who appear to be minors.²⁸

²⁸ <https://eaca.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Policy-Brief-on-Gambling-Advertising.pdf>