



## **Press release**

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### **Europe must work with bookmakers to protect sport's integrity**

**Brussels, 15 November 2011:** The European Sports Security Association (ESSA) calls on the European Union to adopt an evidence-based approach to the issues of sports betting and integrity in its deliberations on the future size and shape of the EU's online gambling market. This comes after the European Parliament today voted on the Green Paper on Online Gambling, which highlighted a number of concerns with regards to sports betting.

Commenting on the vote in Parliament today, Khalid Ali, Secretary General, ESSA said: "The Parliament raises many important points in its report, for example the need for greater cross-border police and judicial controls and the benefit of educating sports professionals about the risks of match fixing. However, we are concerned that the emergence of online gambling is still being linked to increased risk of fraud even when there is no evidence to support this. Furthermore, we believe that seeking to address integrity matters by penalising licensed, regulated operators somewhat misses the point as evidence suggests that the licensed, regulated bookmaking sector is a force for good when it comes to protecting sport integrity."

"We would like to see the EU take an evidence-based approach towards protecting sport integrity and focus on curbing unregulated betting markets and helping sport to improve governance so that players and officials are educated, and incentivised not to fix games and caught and properly punished if they ever digress," Ali added.

ESSA asks that the European Commission takes into account the following points when deliberating online gambling reform:

- There is no evidence to suggest that the risk of fraud has been exacerbated by the emergence of the online sports betting sector, nor that this represents a risk to the integrity of sport.
- Efforts to protect integrity in sport should be separated from the issue of funding in sport as any imposition of a levy would ignore the positive role played by licensed regulated bookmakers in protecting integrity, would benefit unregulated operators and would fail to address the urgent need to improve governance in sport.



- Europe's licensed, regulated bookmakers lead the world in terms of combating betting fraud and have an excellent record in preventing betting-related match fixing.
- Incidences of betting related match fixing involving licensed, regulated bookmakers represent a very small percentage of the total number of integrity threats facing sport when doping, cheating, financial mismanagement, non-betting related match fixing and other scandals are taken into account.

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### **About ESSA**

The European Sports Security Association (ESSA) was established in 2005 by the leading online sports book operators in Europe to monitor any irregular betting patterns or possible insider betting from within each sport. To achieve this goal ESSA implemented an early warning system between its members that highlights any suspicious betting activity. The Early Warning System allows ESSA to work with the sports regulators and their disciplinary and legal departments, ensuring that when an alert is given the regulator is informed immediately which may prevent the possibility of any game manipulation on a given event.

So far, ESSA has signed Memorandums of Understanding with FIFA, UEFA, EPFL, The FA, DFB, ATP, ITF, WTA and has established close relations with the IOC and many other sports regulators.

For more information on ESSA, please go to the ESSA website <http://www.eu-ssa.org>.