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Gambling regulations in Europe: Results from a regulator survey

Governments have increasingly recognised gambling as a serious public health issue and developed regulatory frameworks to mitigate and prevent harm. The European Union has no unified regulatory framework for gambling. European countries engage in some cross-jurisdictional exchange around gambling policy, but regulation of the gambling sector lands mostly under responsibility of state or regional governments. Consequently, European countries take varying approaches to gambling regulation, allowing for comparisons of different models, approaches and practices.

To better understand the current regulatory landscape across Europe, researchers at the University of Helsinki, Karolinska Institute, and Stockholm University conducted a survey amongst European gambling regulators in 2026. The survey addressed regulatory structures and practices in different European countries, focusing specifically on three topical issues: duty of care, advertising regulation and financial regulatory measures. In addition, we included questions on regulatory resources.

The survey was open between January-May 2026. Invitation to participate was sent via email to authorities responsible for gambling regulation in 31 European countries: EU-27 countries, Great Britain, Switzerland, Iceland, and Norway. Respondents were asked to provide their country, name, and institution, but were also given the opportunity to participate anonymously. All participants gave informed consent. We received responses from 22 countries, but three countries were excluded due to largely blank responses. Some countries provided multiple responses addressing different parts of the survey and these were combined. After data cleaning, we had complete or partly complete answers from 19 countries, yielding a response rate of 61.3 %. Included countries are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. European countries and institutions included in the report.

Country	Authority
Belgium	Belgian Gaming Commission
Czech Republic	Gambling Regulation Unit, Ministry of Finance
Denmark	The Danish Gambling Authority (Spillemyndigheden)
Finland	National Police Board of Finland
France	Autorité Nationale des Jeux (ANJ)
Germany	Gemeinsamen Glücksspielbehörde der Länder (GGL)
Hungary	Supervisory Authority for Regulated Activities of Hungary (SZTFH)
Ireland	The Gambling Regulatory Authority of Ireland (GRAI)
Latvia	The Lotteries and Gambling Supervisory Inspection (IAUI) *
Lithuania	Gambling Control Authority, Ministry of Finance
Malta	Malta Gaming Authority
Norway	Norwegian Gambling Authority (Lottstift)
Portugal	Gambling Regulation and Inspection Service (SRIJ)
Romania	National Gambling Office of Romania (ONJN)
Slovenia	Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia
Spain	Dirección General de Ordenación del Juego
Switzerland	Swiss Gambling Supervisory Authority (Gespa)
Sweden	Swedish Gambling Authority (Spelinspektionen)
The Netherlands	The Netherlands Gambling Authority (Kansspelautoriteit)

*In April 2026, the IAUI has been integrated into the State Revenue Service (SRS) and no longer operates as a separate authority.

The survey included multiple-choice questions as well as open-ended questions, allowing respondents to provide additional information and clarify their answers. The results reflect the knowledge and understanding of gambling regulatory authorities regarding gambling regulation in their respective countries. They should therefore be understood as a reflection of how regulatory arrangements are described by the relevant authorities, rather than as an independent assessment of regulatory implementation or effectiveness.

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Main results

- This report summarises results from a survey of gambling regulators in Europe, including responses from 19 countries.
- 68.4 % of respondent countries report having guidelines on how to detect and/or intervene with gambling harm (duty of care).
- In almost all respondent countries (94.7 %) advertising regulations are based on legal rules.
- 63.2 % of respondent countries have issued fines for anti-money laundering breaches. 42.1 % have issued fines for advertising breaches. Another 42.1 % have issued fines for duty of care breaches.
- 68.4 % of respondent countries have legal provisions for payment blocking.
- Resources available to regulators vary significantly across countries, with variation in annual budgets and number of employees.

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It is also important to note that regulatory terminology and practices may vary across countries. The concepts used in the survey may have different meanings, legal bases, or applications depending on national regulatory contexts. This may affect the comparability of responses across jurisdictions: similar terms may refer to different regulatory arrangements, while similar practices may be described using different terminology. The findings should therefore be understood primarily as a mapping of how gambling regulation is described and understood within different European countries rather than as a direct comparison of formally equivalent regulatory measures.

Theme 1: Duty of care

The first topic charted duty of care practices in European countries. Duty of care has been defined as a legal obligation requiring gambling operators to monitor customer behaviour and to intervene to prevent gambling related harm (Hancock et al., 2008). However, the definition of duty of care may be interpreted differently across jurisdictions and across different actors (Persson et al., 2026).

In our survey, 68.4 % of countries (13/19) reported having official guidelines on how licensed gambling operators are expected to detect and/or intervene with harmful gambling behaviours.

All countries that reported having official duty of care guidelines, except for Slovenia, reported that the implementation of duty of care differs across gambling sectors and gambling operators. For example, respondents from the Netherlands and Germany reported that high risk sectors with faster-paced gambling products were subject to more extensive requirements than lower risk sectors involving slower-paced products.

Table 1 provides a summary on how regulators who reported having official duty of care guidelines, view duty of care practices in their country. 76.9 % (10/13) stated that there was a requirement for operators to report on their duty of care practices to the regulator. In addition, 61.5 % (8/13) of countries reported publishing reports on duty of care practices. 76.9 % (10/13) of responding countries reported coordination between duty of care and anti-money laundering regulation.

Duty of care

- 68.4 % of European countries that responded to the survey reported having official guidelines on how to detect and/or intervene with gambling harm.
- 76.9 % of countries reporting duty of care require operators to report on their duty of care practices to the regulator.
- 84.3 % of countries reporting duty of care reported that gambling operators are audited on their duty of care practices.
- Legal and regulatory definitions of duty of care vary across countries. In most cases, the duty involves some form of behavioural monitoring and interventions.
- 61.5 % of countries reporting duty of care (42.1 % of the full sample) had issued fines for non-compliance. The number of breaches identified in the past year ranged from 0 to 7.

Table 2. Duty of care practices in countries that reported having official duty of care guidelines.

	Gambling operators are required to report duty of care practices to the regulator	Regulator publishes reports on duty of care practices	Gambling companies are audited regarding duty of care practices	Gambling companies have been issued fines for duty of care failures	Coordination between duty of care and anti-money laundering regulation
Denmark	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
France	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Germany	Yes	No	Yes		Yes
Lithuania	No	No	No	No	No
Ireland					Yes
Malta	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Norway	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Portugal	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Slovenia	No	No	Yes		Yes
Spain	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Sweden	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Switzerland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The Netherlands	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Empty boxes indicate missing answers.

Definitions of duty of care

We asked those respondents that reported having official duty of care guidelines to provide links to their guidelines. These materials showed a broad definition of duty of care and varying practices in terms of what duty of care entails, how it is implemented and how specific guidelines are.

Based on the legislative sources provided by the regulators, we found that 69.2 % (9/13) of these countries (Lithuania, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Malta, Denmark) require operators to have mechanisms and systems in place to monitor their customers' gambling behaviour and intervene when problematic behaviour is detected. In these countries, laws often included broader requirements for gambling harm prevention while additional decree laws and regulations laid out the more detailed duty of care obligations for operators. These requirements were often not explicitly defined as duty of care – except in Sweden and the Netherlands. For example, in the Swedish Gambling Act, duty of care is defined as 'ensuring that social and health considerations are observed in gambling operations in order to protect players against excessive gambling and to help them reduce their gambling when there is reason to do so' (Spellag 2018:1138). A duty of care framework will be implemented in Denmark and Finland in 2027.

In the four remaining countries that reported having official duty of care guidelines, the linked legislation or guidelines covered broader obligations, such as age limits, self-exclusion, and limit-setting but not explicit mentions of operator-led practices to track customer behaviour and intervene in problematic gambling. In Ireland, gambling regulation, including duty of care guidelines, were under development and the gambling regulator had just been established at the time of the survey.

Auditing and enforcing duty of care

84.3 % (11/13) of responding countries reported that gambling operators are audited on their duty of care practices. Auditing decisions were taken based on a risk-based or a report-based assessment. Practices varied across regulators. For example, according to the Danish regulator, compliance can be audited based on citizen complaints as well as based on the regulator's own risk-matrix. The risk matrix signals which two to three companies are chosen to undergo a full-scope inspection each year. In contrast, in France, the regulator reported that operators are audited by annually reviewing their products, strategies, and action plans. Lithuania reported that companies are not audited.

We also asked respondents whether gambling companies in their country had been issued fines for duty of care failures, and how many breaches had been identified in 2024. According to the responses, operators had been issued fines in 61.5 % (8/13) of countries reporting duty of care: Denmark, France, Malta, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. The number of breaches identified in 2024 ranged from zero (the Netherlands) to seven (Malta).

Theme 2: Gambling advertising

Survey questions on advertising focused on regulatory responsibilities and enforcement. We first asked whether the overall approach to regulating gambling advertising was based on legal rules, self-regulation or a combination of both. 14 countries reported that advertising was regulated via legislation only, with four countries reporting a combination of legislation and industry self-regulation. Malta was the only country reporting that gambling advertising was regulated exclusively via industry self-regulation.

Regulations on advertising of licensed operators

We asked which regulators, state authorities or other actors had responsibilities in regulating gambling advertising of licensed operators. Respondents are likely to have adopted varying definitions of what entails a responsibility and results may not be fully comparable. Responsibilities may relate to a legal mandate in guiding what kind of advertising is permitted, enforcement obligations or broader obligations relating to control over the sector.

Table 3 presents an overview of the results on how regulators see the responsibilities for gambling advertising regulation. In 94.7 % (18/19) of countries, respondents reported that gambling authorities and/or other state authorities had responsibilities in regulating gambling advertising. Other state authorities included consumer, market, and justice authorities.

Advertising

- 94.7 % of countries reported that advertising regulations are based on legal rules. Only one country reported industry self-regulation only.
- Several authorities have responsibilities in regulating gambling advertising in Europe. These include gambling authorities, other state authorities and, in some cases, industry and media groups.
- Regulators engaged in multiple complementary strategies to prevent unlicensed advertising, including blocking unlicensed operators (73.7 %), take down notices (63.2 %), issuing fines (52.6 %) and collaboration with search engines and online platforms (47.4 %).

In addition, regulators in 21.4 % (4/19) countries reported that advertising is regulated by the industry or media groups, such as the ARPP (Autorité de Régulation Professionnelle de la Publicité) in France, which is an advertising industry self-regulatory organisation.

73.7 % (14/19) of countries reported that gambling operators are audited regarding their advertising practices. The exceptions were Slovenia, Hungary, Latvia, and Malta, while Sweden had not responded to this question. Countries reported varying auditing practices. 6/14 (France, Czech Republic, Portugal, Romania, Finland, Germany) countries reported engaging in continuous monitoring of advertising as part of their supervision activities. 4/16 (France, Switzerland, Finland, Denmark) reported annual or bi-annual reviews of companies' marketing practices. Finally, 7/14 (Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Romania, Norway, Belgium, Switzerland) countries reported conducting reviews based on risk indicators or complaints. Most countries reported using a combination of these approaches.

Additionally, 42.1 % (8/19) of all respondent countries reported that licensed gambling operators had been issued fines for advertising failures: Czech Republic, Switzerland, Romania, Finland, the Netherlands, Spain, Malta, and Denmark. Six countries (Norway, Ireland, Sweden, Slovenia, France, Hungary) reported no fines whereas in four countries, the response was missing.

Auditing advertising

'Licensed operators may be subject to advertising compliance checks as part of routine regulatory supervision, targeted inspections or complaint-based investigations. There is no fixed annual audit cycle dedicated to advertising; reviews are conducted based on regulatory priorities and risk indicators.' (Romania)

'Each year, all licensed gambling operators are required to submit their promotional and advertising strategy for the forthcoming year to the ANJ. This must include a detailed description of the projected budget by media channel, the gambling offers intended to be promoted over the year, and any planned new advertising materials.' (France)

'As part of its supervisory activity, the SRIJ constantly monitors whether operators are complying with advertising regulations.' (Portugal)

Table 3. Instances with responsibilities in licensed gambling advertising regulation

	Gambling regulators	Gambling operators or trade groups	Other state authorities	Media groups
Belgium	✓		✓	✓
Czech Republic	✓	✓	✓	✓
Denmark	✓			
Finland	✓			
France	✓		✓	
Germany	✓			
Hungary	✓	✓	✓	
Ireland	✓		✓	
Latvia	✓		✓	
Lithuania	✓		✓	
Malta		✓		
Norway	✓			
Portugal	✓		✓	
Republic of Slovenia	✓			
Romania	✓		✓	
Spain	✓		✓	
Sweden	✓		✓	
Switzerland	✓		✓	
The Netherlands	✓		✓	

Note: Tick means that the box was ticked, empty cells do not necessarily equate to no.

Regulations on unlicensed advertising

Unlicensed gambling refers to gambling provision emanating from offshore jurisdictions without a license in the point-of-consumption jurisdiction. Many unlicensed operators still target advertising efforts to jurisdictions in which they do not have a license. Gambling regulators therefore also dedicate resources to preventing unlicensed advertising. Table 4 shows how regulators in European countries reported on their activities in tackling illegal and unlicensed advertising. Regulators engaged in several approaches. 73.7 % (14/19) of countries reported blocking unlicensed operators, 63.2 % (12/19) used take down notices, 52.6 % (10/19) reported issuing fines to unlicensed operators, and 47.4 % (9/19) collaborated with online platforms or search engines to prevent unlicensed advertising. Only 15.8 % (3/19) of countries reported having explicitly banned sponsorship arrangements with unlicensed operators. This may reflect overall vagueness in legislation on unlicensed gambling advertising.

Most countries reported using multiple enforcement strategies. For example, in Portugal, the regulator reported using a combination of takedown notices and blocking operators: illegal sites are first sent a takedown notice of 48 hours, and after that the authorities proceed with website blocking. Malta was the only country that did not report any action against unlicensed advertising.

Table 4. Enforcement of advertising by unlicensed operators.

	Take down notices	Fines	Blocking operators	Collaboration with online platforms and search engines	Banning sponsorship by offshore operators
Belgium	✓		✓	✓	
Czech Republic	✓	✓	✓		
Denmark	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Finland		✓			
France	✓		✓	✓	
Germany	✓	✓		✓	✓
Hungary	✓	✓	✓		
Ireland	✓		✓	✓	
Latvia			✓		
Lithuania	✓		✓	✓	
Malta					
Norway	✓	✓		✓	✓
Portugal	✓		✓	✓	
Romania	✓		✓		
Slovenia		✓	✓	✓	
Spain		✓	✓		
Sweden					✓
Switzerland		✓	✓		
The Netherlands	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Note: Tick means that the box was ticked, empty cells do not necessarily equate to no.

Theme 3: Financial regulatory measures

The third theme focused on financial regulatory measures, defined here as regulatory actions intended to disrupt financial flows and payments to unlicensed gambling websites, anti-money laundering as well as regulatory action to prevent excessive spending on gambling. The theme was included to understand whether and how regulators engage the broader financial ecosystem in efforts to prevent unlicensed gambling, money-laundering and/or harm.

63.2 % (12/19) of countries reported that licensed companies had been issued fines for non-compliance with anti-money laundering provisions. The number of reported fines for AML breaches in the past year varied from 0 to 38. The highest number of fines was reported by Malta.

We also asked whether the gambling regulator collaborates with payment default registries to control excessive spending on gambling. This type of regulatory collaboration was only reported by two countries (Latvia and Belgium). The Belgian respondent clarified the collaboration as follows: '*A player in Belgium has a spending limit of 200 euros a week. This limit can be replaced by a higher one by request, unless the player is a delinquent player at the national bank of Belgium. When a player is seen as a delinquent player, the Gaming commission has to check his status at the national bank every month, even if he is not playing anymore. This system is very time-consuming, not very efficient, and very expensive.*'

Results on the prevalence of financial regulatory measures focusing on payment blocking in participating countries are presented in Table 5. 68.4 % (13/19) of countries reported having provisions for payment blocking. Amongst this sub-sample, 84.6 % (11/13) reported that banks have responsibilities in payment blocking, and 53.8 % (7/13) reported that payment intermediaries or digital wallets have responsibilities in payment blocking. Only 38.5 % (5/13) of countries had guidelines for banks or payment intermediaries regarding payment blocking. Additionally, 38.5 % (5/13) of countries reported that the regulator has allocated resources to supervise blocking.

Financial measures

- 63.2 % of European countries reported having issued fines for anti-money laundering breaches.
- 68.4 % of European countries reported having legal provisions for payment blocking.
- Amongst countries reporting payment blocking, 84.6 % involved banks in preventing transactions. 53.8 % involved payment intermediaries or digital wallets in preventing transactions.
- A minority of regulators reported having resources to supervise payment blocking.

Table 5. Payment blocking practices reported by regulators.

	Does your country have provisions for payment blocking	Do banks have responsibilities in implementing payment blocking?	Do payment intermediaries/digital wallets have responsibilities in implementing payment blocking?	Has the regulator issued guidelines to banks or payment intermediaries?	Does the regulator have resources to supervise how banks and payment intermediaries implement payment blocking?
Belgium	No				
Czech Republic	Yes	Yes			Yes
Denmark	Yes	No	No	No	No
Finland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
France	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Germany	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hungary	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Ireland					
Latvia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Lithuania	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Malta	No				
Norway	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Portugal	No				
Romania	No				
Slovenia	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Spain	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Sweden	Yes	No	No	No	No
Switzerland	No				
The Netherlands	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

Empty boxes indicate missing answers. Only those who answered 'Yes' to the first question were presented with the follow-up questions.

Theme 4: Regulatory resources

The final theme of the survey focused on the governance structures, resources and collaboration practices of gambling regulators.

We first charted the governance structures of regulatory bodies by asking respondents under which ministries or departments regulators sit. Results are shown in Table 6. Most commonly, gambling regulators were situated under Ministries of Finance or Ministries of Economy (41.2 %, 7/17). In only one country (Spain), the gambling regulator was placed under the Ministry of Social Affairs. In four countries, regulators reported that they were independent of any government ministry.

Table 6. Governance structures of European gambling regulators

Ministry of Finance	Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden
Ministry of Economy	Malta, Portugal
Ministry of Justice	Ireland, Switzerland
Ministry of Taxation	Denmark
Ministry of Culture	Norway
Ministry Of Social Affairs	Spain
Independent authority	France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands

We also asked regulators to provide us with information about their staff and budget resources as well as their sources of financing. These results are presented in Table 7.

Most regulators reported financing through a combination of government funding, licensing fees, fines, and a levy on operators. 38.9 % (7/18) of responding countries (Czech Republic, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden) reported financing only via general taxation/government budget. 16.7 % (3/18) of countries (Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands) reported funding only via a levy on operators. Another 16.7 % (3/18) of countries (Hungary, Malta, Portugal) reported that fines on operators are used to finance the gambling regulator. In most countries, the money from fines was reported to be treated as state revenue and allocated to the general state budget.

The size of the budget available to the regulator varied across countries, ranging from around 1 million euros per year (Latvia, Lithuania) to 40 million euros a year (the Netherlands). Most regulators reported budgets of around 10 million euros per year. We also compared regulatory budgets to population size. Denmark and the Netherlands had the biggest gambling regulatory budgets per capita in 2024. Some countries did not disclose their regulatory budgets.

The number of employees working with the regulator also varied. The Netherlands reported the largest number of employees at the time of the survey, approximately 220. Malta also reported nearly 200 employees. The smallest number of employees was around 20 in Latvia and Slovenia.

We also asked respondents about the educational background of their employees. Employees had diverse backgrounds, but most commonly in law, finance, economics, psychology, administration, and technology.

Regulatory resources

- European gambling regulators are most commonly placed under Ministries of Finance or Ministries of Economy (41.2 % of cases).
- Regulators are typically funded via government funding, licensing fees, fines or a levy, often a combination of these.
- Resources available to regulators vary significantly across countries. Annual budgets range from 1 million Euros to 40 million euros. The number of employees ranges from around 20 to over 200.

Table 7. Gambling regulators' number of employees, yearly budget, and financing source.

	Total number of employees	Annual budget (2024)	Budget per capita (2024)*	Financing of gambling authority
Belgium	32,8 (full time equivalent)	8,1 m€	0,69 €	Levy on operators
Czech Republic	Approx. 30			General taxation/government budget
Denmark	164	14,6 m€	2,45 €	Licensing fees, general taxation/government budget
Finland	Less than 50			Levy on operators
France	82	12,6 m€	0,18 €	General taxation/government budget
Hungary	70			Licensing fees, general taxation/government budget, fines on operators
Ireland	33			Licensing fees, levy on operators
Latvia	20	1,1 m€	0,59 €	General taxation/government budget
Lithuania	33	1,0 m€	0,35 €	General taxation/government budget
Malta	183			Licensing fees, levy on operators, fines on operators
The Netherlands	Approx. 220	40,0 m€	2,23 €	Levy on operators
Norway	Approx. 30	6,2 m€	1,12 €	Licensing fees, levy on operators
Portugal		7,7 m€	0,72 €	Licensing fees, levy on operators, fines on operators
Romania	136			Licensing fees, levy on operators
Slovenia	19			General taxation/government budget
Spain	57	13,5 m€	0,28 €	General taxation/government budget
Sweden	78	8,1 m€	0,77 €	General taxation/government budget
Switzerland	Approx. 50	12,0 m€	1,34 €	General taxation/government budget, levy on operators

*Reported annual budget divided by total population 1 January 2024 (Eurostat, 2026).

Empty boxes indicate missing answers.

Conclusion

This report has summarised the results of a survey to European gambling regulators conducted in January-May 2026. The results have shown variation in regulatory practices, enforcement and implementation with regard to three regulatory aspects: duty of care, advertising and financial measures. We have also found variation in regulatory resources across Europe. While there has not been a unified regulatory framework for gambling within the European Union, we believe that as the gambling industry consolidates in the continent, there is an increasing need for the exchange of information and good practices amongst regulators. We hope that these results can support further cross-jurisdictional learning on regulatory practices in Europe and beyond.

Limitations

The results presented in this survey are subject to limitations. First, despite several reminders, we were unable to get answers from regulators in all European countries. As such, our results do not provide a comprehensive picture of gambling regulation in Europe. Second, some of the countries that did respond, provided incomplete answers, resulting in some gaps in our results. Some countries also informed us that they were undergoing a review of their gambling regulation and that information provided was subject to change. Third, differing definitions of key concepts such as 'duty of care' and 'responsibilities' may have affected how respondents replied to questions. Fourth and finally, the survey results are subject to any possible mistakes or inaccuracies that might have been provided by individual respondents. While we have attempted to verify information from other sources, this was not always possible. These limitations therefore highlight the difficulties in accessing comparative data on gambling regulatory practices in Europe.

Increased collaboration, shared definitions and common regulatory best practice guidelines within the European contexts would significantly improve the current situation in terms of better data access and improved regulatory response.

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