



There is an urgent need for effective policy action to prevent gambling-related problems and address gambling disorders in Europe. ALICE RAP puts forward 24 recommendations for a comprehensive consumer protection policy to reduce gambling-related harm.

**gambling
policy**
consumer protection
online interventions

The growing gambling market in Europe and, in particular, the fast developing technology for interactive gambling (via Internet or mobile devices) is a major challenge for effective consumer protection. All proposals for regulation are faced with the challenge of balancing opportunities for legal gambling, on the one side, and effective Public Health measures to prevent gambling-related harm on the other. Furthermore, private and public gambling operators deal with competing interests in their marketing and business activities between maximizing profit and protecting gamblers from harm.

Within AR, the scientific Work Packages on gambling aimed to better understand the individual and environmental risk factors of risky, harmful and disordered gambling in order to improve public policy and early interventions. The [AR policy paper on gambling](#) highlighted that gambling activity has two facets: whilst for the majority of people it is a pleasurable recreational activity, at the same time, it poses a significant threat to public health in the shape of severe gambling-related problems and mental disorders. To understand why some individuals develop gambling-related problems or disorders, Chapter 6 of the [ALICE RAP e-book](#) (Anderson, Bühringer & Colom, 2015) presented an integrative, heuristic, working model on the determinants of the transition between different stages of gambling. The model proposes that gambling characteristics and social aspects are relevant aetiological factors of early stages of gambling, including onset of risky gambling. In contrast, the transition to harmful gambling, including gambling disorders, is instead determined by individual factors (vulnerabilities such as impaired brain reward circuitries or impaired cognitive control). Current scientific knowledge does not allow the precise definition of patterns of risk factors and their interaction. It is therefore necessary to systematically cover all three areas of risk factors in any Public Health concept aimed at reducing gambling-related harm. Such a consumer protection concept should aim to 1) prevent transitions into risky and harmful gambling, 2) facilitate the early recognition of disordered gambling and support for self-change or professional help in adults, and 3) ban gambling for minors (Bühringer, 2015).

The required regulatory framework should (Bühringer & Walter, 2016):

1. Cover all types of gambling in a limited, controlled market
2. Promote risk awareness
3. Protect the interest of social gamblers
4. Secure the needs for protection of vulnerable/disordered gamblers
5. Be supported by all stakeholders
6. Be effectively controlled by an independent regulatory body
7. Be designed as an adaptive learning system with input from monitored information and scientific expertise

Given that current research has shown that quantitative regulations, such as distance regulations, have limited or no effect on gambling-related problems, qualitative improvements for consumer protection regulations are recommended for a Public Health based approach to reduce harm from gambling (Bühringer & Walter, 2016). These includes regulations on the quality of environmental factors related to gambling (e.g., early information and education about gambling and related risks, limitations on advertising, exclusion of minors and banned players), quality of gambling services (e.g., transparency of game rules, procedures and characteristics), quality of prevention, early identification and treatment (e.g., monitoring of gambling behaviour, self and forced exclusion concepts, training of staff), quality of the regulatory body (e.g., responsibility for all gambling options), and quality of gambling research (e.g., making a distinction between scientific findings and expressed opinions).

READ MORE

Anderson P, Bühringer G & Colom J (2015) [ALICE RAP e-book - Reframing addictions: policies, processes and pressures](#). ALICE RAP

Bühringer G (2015) [ALICE RAP findings on consumer protection for the prevention of gambling problems](#). Presentation given to the 12th meeting of DG GROW's Expert Group on Gambling, 18th September 2015, Brussels, Belgium.

Bühringer G, Braun B, Kräplin A, Neumann M & Slecza P (2013) AR Policy paper 2: [Gambling - two sides of the same coin: recreational activity and public health problem](#). ALICE RAP

Bühringer G, Walter K (2016) A Public Health-based Approach to German Gaming Regulation. Presentation given on the International Conference on Gambling and Risk Taking, 6th - 10th June 2016, Las Vegas, USA.