

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0118/06

pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure

by Arlene McCarthy, on behalf of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection  
to the Commission

Subject: Gambling and sports betting in the Internal Market

The IMCO Committee takes note of the European Commission's decision of 4 April 2006 to launch infringement procedures concerning restrictions imposed on sports betting markets which are deemed to be incompatible with article 49 TEC (freedom to provide services).

Furthermore, the IMCO Committee notes the EU Ombudsman's special report issued on 30 May 2006, criticising the European Commission's handling of a gambling infringement case and emphasising that the Commission is not entitled to delay in dealing with an infringement complaint on the grounds that it is unable to find a political consensus on how to proceed.

The IMCO committee also recalls the ruling of the European Court of Justice in case C-243/01 'Gambelli and others' of November 2003.

1. What is the progress on the infringement proceedings launched on 4 April 2006 and what are the next steps planned by the Commission?
2. Does the European Commission intend to restrict the infringement procedures only to the sports betting sector or does it envisage further actions in other gambling-related sectors where discriminatory practices are identified?
3. What initiatives is the Commission preparing to develop a legal framework for on-line gambling that will allow Member States to safeguard consumers and protect minors while allowing legitimate operations by reputable firms?

Tabled: 16.10.2006

Forwarded: 18.10.2006

Deadline for reply: 25.10.2006