

[BG] Roundtable concerning gambling commercial communications and self-regulation of gambling operators

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Съветът за електронни медии (the Council for Electronic Media – CEM) convened a roundtable on gambling commercial communications in media services and video sharing platform services (*Кръгла маса относно търговското слово за хазарт*) which took place on 13 December 2022.

The roots of the discussions can be traced back to August 2022 when a Memorandum for Cooperation was signed between CEM and *Национална агенция за приходите* (the National Revenue Agency – NRA). The reason behind the debate was the aggressive campaigns of gambling advertising which increased, especially with the broadcast of the World Cup. The latter provoked the submission of petitions by *Националната мрежа за децата* (the National Children’s Network) and *Асоциация „Родители“* (the Parents Association) to various authorities insisting on a complete ban on gambling advertising and changes to the Bulgarian Gambling Act and the Bulgarian Criminal Code. According to the members of both organizations, gambling advertising poses a serious threat to children, and media content in the field of gambling should be regulated.

Representatives of the NRA, as well as media service providers and major local and international gambling operators, took part in the roundtable on 13 December 2022.

Sonya Momchilova, the Chairperson of CEM, emphasized at the opening of the debate that the Council receives numerous signals from discontented viewers on a daily basis. However, the powers provided to the regulator under the Bulgarian Radio and Television Act are very limited, and yet the regulation of gambling advertising is of utmost importance in the work of CEM as a sensible responsibility to adolescents in the country.

The representatives of *Българска гейминг асоциация* (the Bulgarian Gaming Association) announced in the debate that a lot of gambling operators signed a non-binding *Меморандум за социално отговорна реклама на дейността си* (Memorandum for Socially Responsible Advertising) as a form of self-regulation, pursuant to which:

- Advertisements shall not feature people under 23 years of age;
- Announcing the amount and type of bonuses and prizes in radio and television advertisements shall be prohibited;
- Broadcasting of gambling advertisements in radio and television programs shall be prohibited from 5:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (except during sporting events);
- Advertisements should include an explicit call for responsible gambling (reasonable betting);
- Advertisements should not be placed near schools;
- Advertisements should not be displayed on sportswear for children and adolescents.

Gambling operators and *Националният съвет за саморегулация* (the National Council for Self-regulation) are planning a new meeting in order to discuss the adopted rules as well as additional measures which could be included in the National Ethical Rules for Advertising and Commercial Communication (which will have a binding effect), including the advertising of gambling games.

Furthermore, the above events then led to discussions in the Bulgarian Parliament as well. Self-regulation of gambling operators may not prove sufficient and changes to the local legislation may be the best-case scenario, but it remains to be seen how the authorities would approach the situation.

Кръгла маса относно търговското слово за хазарт

<https://www.cem.bg/displaynewsbg/860>

Roundtable on Gambling Commercial Communications

Меморандум за социално отговорна реклама на дейността си

<https://bta.bg/bg/news/bulgaria/national-news/369418-za-mediyna-regulatsiya-na-reklamite-na-hazart-nastoyavat-natsionalnata-mrezha-za>

Memorandum for Socially Responsible Advertising

Националната мрежа за децата и Асоциация „Родители“

<https://bta.bg/bg/news/bulgaria/national-news/369418-za-mediyna-regulatsiya-na-reklamite-na-hazart-nastoyavat-natsionalnata-mrezha-za>

The National Children's Network and Parents Association

