PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gambling services in the EU – Commission set to consider EU legislation

Brussels/Strasbourg, 11 February 2010 --- The European Casino Association (ECA) strongly welcomes the European Commission's announcement about its intention to address gambling services in the EU by issuing a policy paper on the matter before the Autumn 2010.

Newly nominated Commissioner for the Internal Market, Michel Barnier, today stood up to questions and comments from Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) on the Commission's stance and intended plans on online gambling in light of the landmark Liga Portuguesa decision by the European Court of Justice.

Stating that Member States have indeed the right to establish their own national gambling frameworks, Commissioner Barnier endorsed the principles underlying the recent Liga Portuguesa ruling. Barnier promised that during his term, a new approach to gambling would be taken and that he would closely cooperate with the Council, the Parliament, Member States and stakeholders to find an EU solution to the challenges posed by cross border crime and online gambling.

The vast majority of MEPs called on Commissioner Barnier to make gambling services a priority topic for the coming years and to gear any future legislative initiative to the findings of the Schaldemose report and the Liga Portuguesa ruling. "Stop talking, start acting" was the nearly unanimous message by MEPs, who consider the Commission's tactic of covering Member States with infringement proceedings as counter-productive.

Ron Goudsmit, Chairman of the ECA, said: "We are very pleased that Commissioner Barnier is committed to engage with stakeholders to find a common solution. We believe that an EU approach is indispensible to effectively ban illegal gambling operators, combat fraud and crime, and to ensure the highest level of protection for Europe's consumers." "Identifying common standards is an important start" says Goudsmit. "The ECA has worked out a set of common consumer protection standards in particular for the online sector, where the risks of fraud by operators against consumers and of gambling addiction are more substantial."

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He added: "As the voice for Europe's casino industry, we are committed to share our extensive experience in the area of gambling to best support the Commission in its quest to identify a common approach."

About the European Casino Association (ECA)

The European Casino Association represents the interests of more than 1,000 casinos and around 83,000 employees in 23 countries across Europe. Founded in the early 1990s as the European Casino Forum, the ECA has grown steadily over the years and today includes members from the majority of EU Member States, Switzerland and Serbia.

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