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Copy: Mr Guido BERARDIS  
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Dear Sirs

### **Italy: Right to Buy & Betting Services**

I am writing to advise you of a matter that is of great concern to me. A new bill which includes severe criminal sanctions for those who bet on sites not licensed by AAMS (regulator for betting and gaming) is currently going through the Italian parliament<sup>1</sup>. In this bill no distinction is drawn between mafia-run gambling dens and sites that are legal, licensed and regulated elsewhere in the EU. As a consumer, I am very concerned about these measures. All I want to be able to do is get a good price when I place a bet and the prices that I am able to get on these sites are much better than on Italian site. In addition the games are more advanced, a wider range of sports is available and my online experience is generally more enhanced than would be the case on the sites that are currently licensed in Italy.

I could understand the government's position more easily if I was trying to bet on an unlicensed site from a territory outside of the EU but the United Kingdom has one of the most sophisticated gambling regulatory regimes in the world and protects consumers' interests just as well, if not better than Italy. The Italian government has already tried to block sites that are not licensed by AAMS<sup>2</sup> (again with no distinction between EU-regulated sites and unlicensed sites from elsewhere) but now they are targeting consumers and it seems to be a step too far.

I know that the European Commission takes a particular interest in consumers' rights and the Internal Market. I do not understand why I should be treated in an EU member state as a criminal. To me betting online is no different from buying and selling on Ebay or trading shares on the internet. And at the very least, in an Internal Market like the EU, I do not expect to face a possible jail sentence of 3 months plus a €180,000 fine when an equivalent service licensed in Italy would not present such a risk.

I hope that you will be able to speak to the Italian government and tell them that what they are doing is not consistent with membership of the EU. European consumers need protection from disproportionate and protectionist measures which restrict our right to buy e-commerce services across borders. I am sure that if they can get away with it, the governments will not stop at online gambling and this could have a very serious effect on the whole Internal Market. Unfortunately time is running out as the bill should be passed in under 2 months.

I look forward to your prompt reply

Yours sincerely:

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<sup>1</sup> The so-called "Comunitaria" or Disposizioni per l'adempimento di obblighi derivanti dall'appartenenza dell'Italia alle Comunità europee - Legge comunitaria 2008 (AC 2320)

<sup>2</sup> In Italy since February 2006 ISPs are required to block an AAMS published list of gambling sites and failure to do so can result in being fined