

What struck me in the letter of the EU Commission is that the commissioner (McCreevy) copied direct statements of the lawyers of, among others, Ladbrokes. This is outrageous.

It cannot be that the EU Commission no longer executes its own 'homework' and only functions as a mouthpiece of the bookmakers.

We know very well the arguments of Ladbrokes. These arguments have been discussed extensively during the many court cases in the Netherlands.

Both the court in Arnhem and the Supreme Court have rejected these arguments (at recurrence) and we have won all the court cases after well-founded judgments.

This accounts also for the analysis of the numbers of the marketing costs, which have been literally copied by the EU Commission--one compares here apples with [oranges]. Our financial figures are published in the annual reports and the information is open for everyone.

In the Netherlands however (at the request of the Ministry of Justice) all gaming operators have made a format resulting in a 'uniform of account' for costs, directly related to the national publicity exposure, such as TV shows, TV commercials, print, direct mail, etc.

An external accountant company reviews these figures, which are good tools to follow the development of these costs, and, if required, one can intervene.

Perhaps the system is not yet perfect. But it has been agreed--exactly for this reason--that after two years, this format can be evaluated to judge if it satisfies the expectations or that it has to be adopted.

At the end of this year, this evaluation will take place together with the Ministry.

To my knowledge, this format is rather unique in the world. It shows a responsible approach of the Dutch government and the joint legal gambling operators in the Netherlands.