

Gambling opportunities and prevention programmes in Finland

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Preventive tools for adolescence gambling

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Structure

Gambling opportunities in Finland

Government have monopoly for gambling business.

Three companies:

- RAY - Slot Machine Association (Slots, casino games). 18 000 slot machines located in public places
- Veikkaus (sports betting and lottery). Online betting and 3000 places to gamble (retailers)
- Fintoto (horse betting). Online betting, horse tracks and retailers
- Gambling profits have increased all the time

Age limits:

- Slots 15-years; casino and gaming rooms 18-years
- Sport betting 15-years, via Internet 18-years
- Horses 15-years, via Internet 18-years

Structure

- Veikkaus shares money mainly to culture, sports and science; RAY to non-governmental organizations (NGO); Fintoto to horse upbringing industry
- Closer to entertainment business (Universal phenomenon)
- Advertising: quite aggressive – Veikkaus and Fintoto advertising their products, while RAY advertises with the image of good will they are producing to society

Finnish scene – handling problematic gambling

- Understanding the issue early 1990: problem gambler definition and estimates, how big problem it is in Finland - was very closely linked to alcohol addiction
- Treatment to substance abuse clinic (A-clinic foundation). No actual knowledge of the addiction called pathological gambling – no tools to handle. Same time Finnish alcohol consumption has increased – so A-clinic have their hands full with alcoholics
- 65 000 problem gamblers (sogs 5+) (2003)

Fundamental problem

- There have been no expertise _ no education _ social- and healthcare doesn't recognise problem gambler _ when it's recognised, no proper treatment _ problem gambler is stranger in public service system
- But! Many positive things have started to happen on past two years

Finnish short history of gambling problems prevention

- Few manuals (about problematic gambling) were made by The Finnish Blue Ribbon and A-clinic foundation. This was the closest to preventive approach until last few years, when Peluuri – Finnish Help Line was established September 2004. (Important: founded “new” problem gambling groups – not just people with multi-problematic behaviour)
- First prevention program: Preventive tools for adolescence gambling started January 2007
- 3 years project funded by Slot Machine Association (RAY)
- Located in Life Tastes Better Without Drugs organisation, which operates with children, adolescents and young adults mainly in schools, Internet (virtual bus, chats) and for example uses mobile phone as a tool for preventive work

Goals

Two stages:

1. More abstract; raise debate and try to affect, gambling infrastructure, politics and public opinion
2. Concrete; create tools, how people can control their gambling (gaming), share information

Goals

- Increase awareness of possible problems of gambling (gaming), Affect atmosphere what emphasizes gambling as a pure entertainment, discusses the changing scene of gambling (mobile based gambling, televisions gaming programs, new ways to gamble with money on Internet – computer games)
- Project asks questions, reason the measures what we are doing with this issue, write about subject, increase awareness on media
- Gather organisations (for example welfare, childcare) to work together
- Treatment's future is on public social- and health services, so we are making partnerships to that direction

Goals

- Create tools for controlling gambling: information about coincidence and real possibilities of winning, offer mobile phone based calculator to help individual monitor his/her gambling – money and time factor. Uses means which are common to youngsters; Internet, mobile phone, game as a preventive tool and so on.
- Collect data. Till the end of May, we have data of 7000 13-15-years old, who have answered on questionnaire about possible problems of gambling. So far the data tells that almost 1/3 of the youngsters feel that they often gamble too much
- Campaigns on Internet, radio, TV, mobile phones...
- Our first approach is not just to look for risk groups – target is larger population

To conclude

- Gambling (gaming) opportunities are not showing any signs of diminishing (decrease)
- We know that only 10-15 % of people suffering from addiction problems will look for help – in that context, programmes of prevention are reasonable solutions
- If we have a state owned monopoly system, it should be open (to debate) and acknowledge the problems it's creating