The possibilities and limits of responsible gambling programs in preventing gambling-related harms

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Responsible gambling policies

- <u>Beyond-compliance policies</u> - self-regulation (see Wohl et. al., 2013)

- Voluntary for operators (and players)

- monetary limits, time limits, pop-up messages, self-exclusion bans/agreements, ethical guidelines (marketing, product design)

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Possibilites of responsible gambling (1)

1. Voluntariness for gamblers and operators makes them politically convenient
   - no hard regulation needed
   - submission with consent
   - fit with the contemporary consumer ethics of choosing

2. The use of gambling data
   – in-detail analysis of gambling behavior

3. Identification of problem gamblers (PG)

   – it would be possible to prevent problem gambling

   completely

Limitations of responsible gambling (1)

1. Freedom paradox (Kingma 2015)

    – if PG`s problem is impaired decision-making, can one

    expect PG to choose voluntarily RG tools?

    – limited interventions (safeguarding customer freedom)

2. Limited evidence of effectiveness (e.g. Gainsbury 2015;

    Ladouceur et. Al. 2012)

    – high quality longitudinal studies needed

Limitations of responsible gambling (2)

3. Objectivity and knowledge paradoxes (Kingma 2015)

    – PG estimates considered too often as hard facts

    → false belief in the rational control of gambling

    problems   → realisation that part of the

    problem is beyond   control and identification →

    all PGs do not   choose responsible

    gambling and cannot be   forced to

Different uses of responsible gambling

- The many faces of responsible gambling

    - rhetorical ("window-dressing", "lip-service")

    - political

    - effective (?) prevention/harm reduction

    - unintended consequences

    - competetive edge – good business

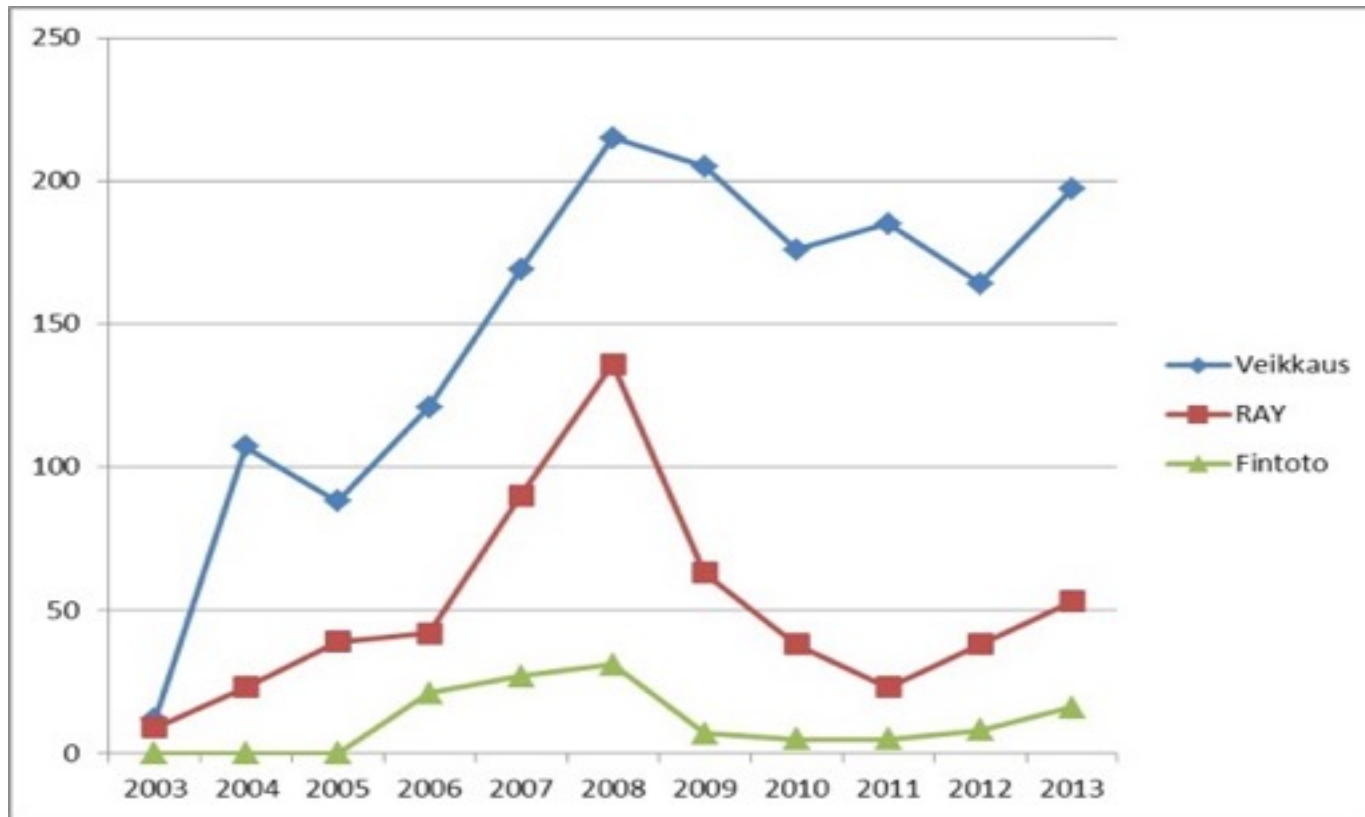   - response to impending regulation

Example 1: Political use of RG

Figure 1. Frequencies of expressions related to social responsibility in the annual reports of the Finnish gambling operators between 2003 and 2013.

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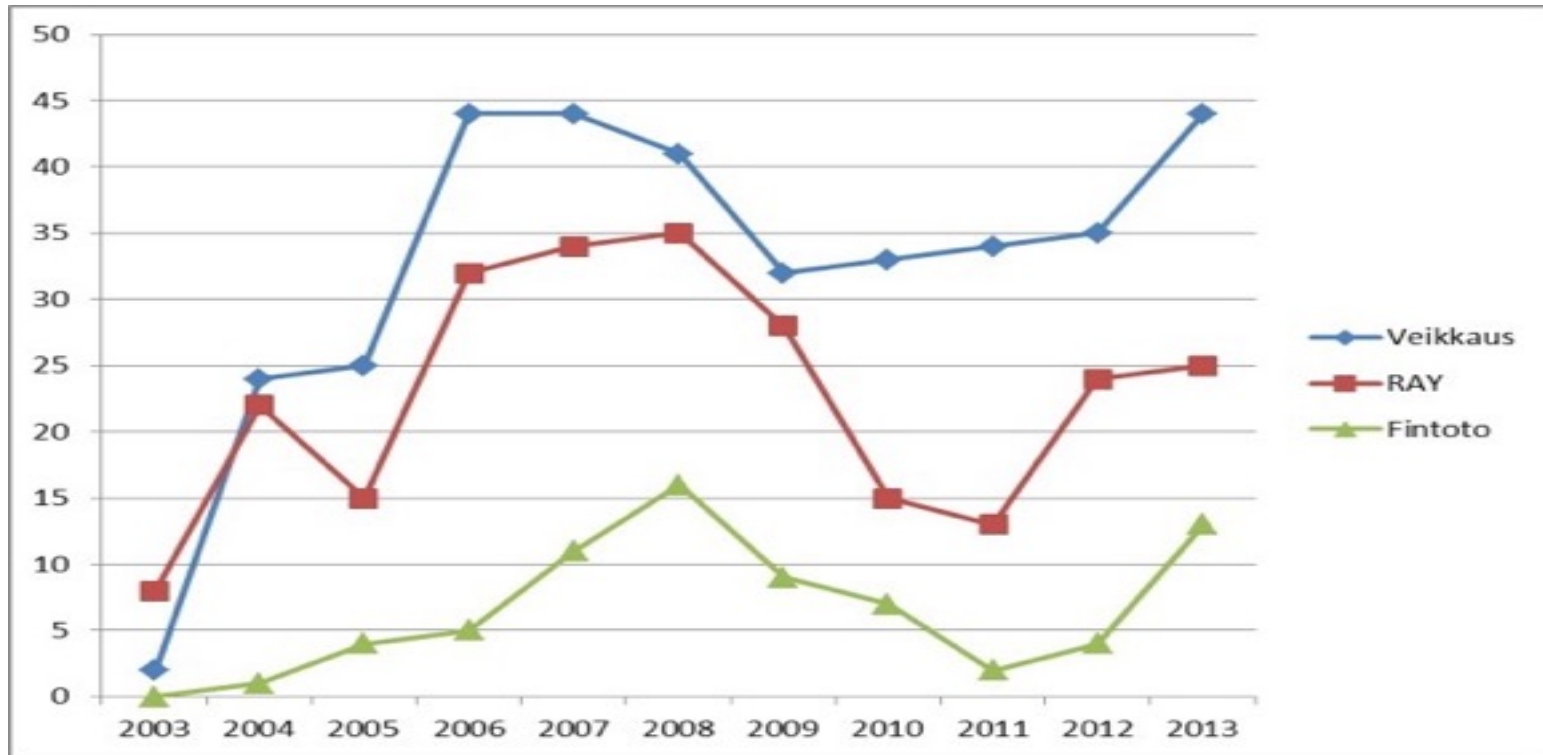# Example 2: More political use of RG

Figure 2. Frequencies of expressions related to gambling-related harms in the annual reports of the Finnish gambling operators between 2003 and 2013.

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Example 3: RG as rhetoric

- Marketing: 27 control cases against the Finnish operators (2010-2014) despite their ethical guidelines

- Assessment of the addiction risk: 9 cases (2010-2014) where the regulator demanded alterations to the proposed product

  à The operators refused to disclose the results of their "responsibility tool" to experts assessing the products

  à Responsibility tool and its results were used in a way that hindered the risk assessment

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In conclusion

- Evidence on effective voluntary RG measures almost nonexistent

- Without evidence on effectiveness, RG is a matter of "transferring responsibility for industrialized…harm production to end users" (Livingstone & Woolley, 2007) → **is this responsible?**

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Thank you for your attention!

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