

Spelproblem i Sverige: dagsläge och framåtblickar

**How effective is self-exclusion to reduce harm
from gambling?**

An international comparative analysis of regulations

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Background

- Increase in gambling offers, especially online offers as a result of liberalisation and deregulation
- Online gambling: legalization within existing structures or licensing
- Partially regulated online market
- Measures needed to balance societal benefits, fraud and crime, and problems and harms caused by gambling
- →→ Various measures within the framework of the responsible gambling approach: time and monetary restrictions, card-based programmes, etc.

Background



- Self-exclusion, a player-initiated exclusion from gambling (self-ban)
- Part of the legal gambling regulation in many countries
- Building block of the individualised Responsible Gambling approach (RG):
- Public health approach: supply reduction
- Evidence for effectiveness of the PH approach ([Meyer et al, 2018](#); [Rossow et al, 2016](#); [Rolando et al, 2021](#); [Babor et al., 2022](#))
- Profits of the gambling industry and tax income (state) stand in opposition to this

Research questions

- Self-exclusion (SE) shifts the responsibility of dealing with gambling-related problems from providers (governmental as well as commercial) to the individual
- Positive evaluation of SE as an individual intervention (Gainsbury et al, 2014; McMahon et al, 2019; Motka et al, 2018)
 - Effectiveness in reducing gambling-related problems at population level ?
 - Analysis of self-exclusion systems in countries with different gambling regulations

Methods

- (1) Comparison and analysis of approach, implementation, scope, control and effect of SE programmes
- (2) Under what conditions do SE measures have an effect on gambling-related problems at the population level?
 - Information on gambling and SE regulations, including SE registers, length of ban, termination, and control
 - Germany, Finland, Italy, Massachusetts (USA), Norway, Sweden and Victoria (Australia)
 - *'Responding to and Reducing Gambling Problems Studies (REGAPS)'*

Legal Frameworks

- Clear differences in the various countries
 - Finland and Norway: state monopoly
 - Italy, Massachusetts, Victoria: full or partial licensing
 - Germany and Sweden: state monopoly and licensing
- Framework conditions differ with regard to
 - Extent of the state monopoly
 - Extent and type of transfer to private providers (licenses etc).
 - Modalities of online gambling and
 - Share of the online market that is neither subject to a monopoly nor licenses

Legal frameworks

- Mixed evidence on the effectiveness of different legal frameworks in preventing gambling-related problems
- State monopolies perform slightly better than license-based regulations (Marionneau et al, 2021)
- Due to the large differences in state monopolies

Factors such as “availability, accessibility, scope of preventive work, responsible gambling policies, the existence of a sufficiently resourced independent monitoring body, as well as the implementation of a public health approach to gambling may better predict the levels of harm in society” than a monopoly (Marionneau et al, 2021, p.232)

Self-exclusion regulations

Central SE register

- In Germany, Italy, Massachusetts, Norway and Sweden with ID verification
- Norway and Massachusetts: central for all terrestrial providers
- Germany and Sweden: central including licensed online providers
- Finland and Italy: central for online providers, terrestrial providers require individual blocking
- Victoria: no register

Self-exclusion regulations

Length of ban and termination

- Different lengths of ban and rules for termination
- Temporary suspensions end automatically in Finland, Italy and Sweden
- So-called 'permanent' bans in Finland and Sweden last for one year, in Italy 6 months, after which the ban can be lifted on application
- Massachusetts: final interview with a social worker
- Italy and Germany: written request to have the ban lifted
- Victoria: final interview plus presentation of confirmation of counselling in an addiction help facility (on paper)

Self-exclusion regulations

Utilisation

- SE use depends on the motivation of the individual
- Problem gamblers are the group for whom SE is an option. The proportion of SE users in this group would be a suitable indicator of effectiveness
- For Germany, it was estimated that 15 out of 100 gamblers with a lifetime diagnosis of gambling disorder used self-exclusion, 5 out of 100 with a current diagnosis
- Routine data are not collected in any country
- Only Norway reports SE figures in relation to the total number of gamblers: in 2019, 1.45% of gamblers at Norsk Tipping got themselves banned, 1.75% including Norsk Rikstoto (29,000)
- In the other countries only absolute numbers; in Victoria none

Self-exclusion regulations

Enforcement

- Self-exclusion is only controllable via IDs and entry or dial-in control if a national register is available
- Implemented for terrestrial gambling in Massachusetts and Norway, for terrestrial and online gambling in Sweden and currently in Germany, for online gambling in Italy and Finland
- Victoria: Providers should (!) inform banned players, but are not obliged to block access
- Massachusetts: Penalties for violation of self-exclusion for players. Players must leave the gambling hall, winnings are confiscated
- Sweden: Heavy penalties have already been imposed on gambling operators for violations of statutory SE regulations

Discussion

- Large differences in regulation and design of player self-exclusion
- In Norway, Sweden and partly Finland, SE is regulated much more strictly than in the other countries
- SE regulations are weak and poorly controlled in countries with a focus on profit maximization compared to countries with a public health orientation
- Exemplified by the political scandals in Victoria with allegations of money laundering and lax government oversight:
'Crown Melbourne has for many years consistently breached its Gambling Code and, therefore, a condition of its casino license' (Victorian Royal Commission, 2021)

Discussion

Self-exclusion: a measure to reduce gambling-related problems in the population?

Weaknesses that show the ineffectiveness of the measure to reduce gambling-related problems:

- A substantial part of the market is neither subject to a monopoly nor licenses. Banned players can use this market
- Lack of consistent monitoring
- Inconsistency of SE registers allows circumvention of bans. This is the rule rather than the exception: of lifetime banned players tracked over 6 years, only 13% have not played since inception (Nelson et al., 2010). In Germany, in a recent study, 28% reported gambling despite being banned (Hayer et al., 2020)

Discussion

- Low user rate. Reduction of gambling-related problems remains low as long as use among problem gamblers is low
- The decision to self-exclude from gambling is primarily in the hands of the players

Self-exclusion and the Responsible Gambling Approach

- Ineffective (Livingstone & Rinault, 2020) and ethically questionable (Nikkinen & Marionneau, 2014; Kankainen et al., 2021)
- Limitation or prohibition of certain forms of gambling are called for
- But measures to minimize harm collide with the economic interests of state and commercial providers
- This dilemma is the fundamental paradox of the risk management agenda (Kingma, 2015).

Discussion

Self-exclusion: a Responsible Gambling measure

- Problem gambling is defined as a dichotomy between self-controlled action and behaviour beyond the player's control: thus, self-exclusion is the measure of choice
- Lack of self-control is responsible for problems - Gambling itself and gambling industry advertising are left out of the equation
- Alibi for providers in the face of problems - *"after all, we are making an offer!"*
- An offer with low costs for providers. Demonstrated in the cynical position of the gambling industry in Victoria with the denial of any responsibility for any negative consequences
- Self-blocking is a measure found only in gambling. There is no other good where this measure is used as a prevention strategy

Discussion

Self-exclusion: a Responsible Gambling measure (cont...)

- By assigning responsibility to the player, the state violates its duty of supervision towards the player
- 60% of gambling operators' turnover comes from players with gambling-related problems (Fiedler, 2015; Fiedler et al., 2019)

Conclusions

- With few exceptions, SE has only a minor effect on gambling-related problems in the population
- It is mainly the problem gamblers for whom SE is helpful. Even if they are few, they contribute the larger part to turnover
- If this group was excluded, it would have a strong effect on gambling-related problems
- Changes needed to establish SE as a PH measure. Increase SE use by reforming the legal framework by:

Closing loopholes, minimizing the unlicensed market, strict monitoring of providers, independent control authorities, general ID check by all providers, coherent SE register, user rate as an indicator (proportion banned/GD), information and education, establishment of third-party exclusion

Literature



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Self-exclusion from gambling: A toothless tiger?

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RESEARCH

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'We are not the ones to blame'. Gamblers' and providers' appraisal of self-exclusion in Germany

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[Voluntary Self-Exclusion from gambling](#)

[Expert opinions on gaps and needs for improvement](#)

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