

Betting industry urges EU action vs. German ban

„The European Gaming and Betting Association calls on the European Commission to take swift action against the German Interstate Treaty on gaming,“ the lobby group said in a statement.

The treaty, which came into force on January 1, bans online gaming and betting, except for horse races, in Germany.

The EGBA said the ban „is in direct contravention of European Union law.“

„The German Interstate Treaty is incompatible with EU law, and its adoption has left us with no other choice but to make a formal complaint to the European Commission,“ EGBA Secretary General Sigrid Ligne said.

„We urge the Commission now to fast-track our complaint and launch infringement proceedings against Germany,“ Ligne said.

EU Internal Market Commissioner Charlie McCreevy has sought to crack down on cross-border hurdles to competition in the gambling sector but has faced opposition from countries such as France.

McCreevy already launched legal action against Germany over the treaty last year, before it came into force.

„The Commission does not believe this piece of legislation is in line with community law,“ spokesman Oliver Drewes said. „We now have to decide in the near future if we take this legal action to the next step.“

Commission officials are due to decide in coming days whether to push ahead with legal actions in the gambling sector against several EU states.

If Brussels were to push ahead against Germany, it would be in the form of a final warning before the country is taken to the European Court of Justice, which has powers to fine and force the country to change its laws.

The EGBA is an association of the European gaming and betting operators, including Bet-at-home.com, Bwin, Digibet.com, Carmen Media Group, Expekt.com, Interwetten, PartyGaming and Unibet.

The lobby group said the Germany treaty makes the granting of licenses „completely discretionary,“ and it places an „unjustified and inconsistent prohibition of online gaming and betting,“ as well as „strict advertising and sponsoring prohibitions.“