



# **Esports Teams x Licensed & Regulated Gambling Operators**

Overview



# Esports Teams x Licensed & Regulated Gambling Operators

## Overview

With licensed & regulated gambling / betting sponsorships being reduced within football (in the UK and may be other jurisdictions), potentially from the 2025/26 season, instinctively there might be an opportunity to recycle some of this investment to co-create a new wave of sponsorship, specifically for competitive gaming (esports) teams, events and tournaments (pending any Publisher considerations). This paper sets out some initial thinking to this opportunity, with a focus geographically on the United Kingdom and European markets initially to develop a case study, before a potential global rollout.

## Growth of the Online Betting Sector & Context

- In 2024, online gambling revenues reached an all-time high of US\$97.15bn globally. This is estimated to increase to US\$132.90bn by 2029. The UK market is valued at US\$13.78bn in 2024 and is projected to reach US\$16.46bn by 2029.
- In the UK and across Europe, betting operators spend significantly on advertising each year. Estimates for 2023 suggest that the total advertising expenditure by the gambling industry in the UK was around £1.5 billion. This includes various forms of media such as television, online, and out-of-home advertising. This sum would be repeated in most European jurisdictions.
- Revenue in the Online Gambling market in Europe combined is projected to reach US\$46.74bn in 2024. Revenue is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2024-2029) of 4.43%, resulting in a projected market volume of US\$58.06bn by 2029.
- Specifically, in football, betting operators are particularly prominent in front-of-shirt sponsorships. In 2023, these sponsorships alone were valued at approximately £60 million in the UK alone, reflecting the deep ties between gambling companies and football clubs
- Including front-of-shirt sponsorships and other sports-related deals as a whole, spending is estimated to be around £100-120 million annually
- The front-of-shirt sponsorship ban for betting operators in the UK will come into effect at the start of the 2026/2027 football season. This decision was made by Premier League clubs in April 2023 and other European states are watching what the UK does.
- In the Premier League, nearly half of clubs have gambling brands as their front-of-shirt sponsors. Nine out of 14 teams in the Bulgarian top division are affiliated with betting companies. 17% of shirt sponsors in UEFA member countries are sports betting and gambling companies. 29% of the naming rights for UEFA member leagues that were sold were purchased by sports betting companies. 10.5% of teams in the French Ligue 1 have betting companies as shirt sponsors. 5.6% of team sponsorship in the German Bundesliga is gambling. Some countries like Spain have already banned gambling sponsorship on front of shirts, but operators are still sponsoring teams, displaying their logo's elsewhere within stadiums.

## The challenge

Looking at esports teams and tournaments specifically, some teams have partnered with licensed and regulated betting operators. However some betting operators might have had their fingers burned by not having achieved quite the ROI set out and promised by esports teams and tournaments in the past.

At the other scale, some esports teams are partnering with unlicensed or grey betting operators. Based overseas (i.e. Asia), these operators do offer their betting products 'unofficially' to UK and EU consumers, but with no consumer protection or ways to redress. This perhaps demonstrates that esports teams and tournament organisers might benefit from some support and guidance around sponsorship and governance, betting integrity, the licensed and grey gambling market, and consumer protection / safeguarding as inevitably esports fans will gamble.

Equally betting operators might also benefit from some support and guidance around the global esports sponsorship opportunities, how to engage teams and tournaments organisers, how to deliver consumer protection to an esports audience and how to structure sponsorship contracts to ensure maximum ROI is achieved. It goes without saying, we also need to impart learning from football sponsorship to minimise toxicity within the esports ecosystem from such arrangements.

## The opportunity

Incorporate a specific UK registered company to (i) co-create a low touch, but high impact Framework for esports teams; taking them on a journey to be 'certified, recognised and trusted' esports partner for licensed UK or EU betting operators and (ii) co-create a similar low touch, but high impact Framework for licensed betting operators, taking them also on a journey to also become 'certified, recognised and a trusted' sponsor for the esports ecosystem.

This approach will benefit from taking learning from betting football sponsorship and address the challenges as above. A new company is recommended as our research suggests such an entity does not current exist who can take on this role. Specifically an entity with both the esports and betting expertise and insight.

## Re-imagining betting sponsorship

A new company also has the opportunity to build upon and realign the 'betting sponsorship narrative' specifically within esports. The esports sector is worth \$1.72bn in 2023 and is expected to grow to \$9.29bn by 2032. This represents a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 20.7% from 2024 to 2032, potentially dwarfing the 7% CAGR of gambling.

In 2025 there are expected to be over 318 million esports enthusiasts worldwide, including 322.7 million occasional viewers. Importantly the breakdown of viewers are:

- Millennials (25–41 years old) – 50%
- Gen Z (16–24 years old) – 26%
- Generation X (42–56 years old) – 20%
- Baby Boomers (57+) – 4%

Framing betting sponsorship in a way that is built on trust, integrity, certificated suppliers and delivers ROI to both parties and the wider esports ecosystem is what we are seeking to achieve. Supporting the wider (and grassroots) esports ecosystem is important, so such things as making community grants available and facilitating donations to develop local case studies of impact will be critical to evidence a re-imagination of sponsorship, specifically for the esports sector.



© Engineered Impact 2025. All rights reserved.

[w: engineeredimpact.com](https://engineeredimpact.com)   [t: 0203 488 5227](tel:02034885227)   [e: info@engineeredimpact.com](mailto:info@engineeredimpact.com)