EU lashes out at Netherlands gambling monopolies

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The government of Holland is actively increasing the amount of money it is spending to advertise state controlled gambling. The Dutch government has a monopoly on the gambling market in Holland. Holland Casino and De Lotto, both owned by the state, have a monopoly on commercial gambling in the Netherlands.

Several foreign operators are currently trying to build land based casinos in the Netherlands but have been refused licenses by the government. The move is in direct contradiction to EU rules according to a letter from internal markets commissioner Charlie McCreevy that was recently leaked.

Holland Casino was recently granted the exclusive rights to provide internet gambling to the countries citizens. McCreevy has stated that the Netherlands is pursuing a ‘policy of expansion’ when it comes to the state monopoly on all forms of gambling and says there is no reason other European companies cannot enter the Dutch gambling market.

A justice ministry spokesman told ANP that the cabinet has replied to McCreevy's claims and that the government maintains its view that the state’s gambling monopoly reduces addiction and crime. While this may or may not be the case, the Netherlands government should start to open up its market to foreign competition or they could be forced to in much the same way as what is happening in France.

Back in July, the French High Court ruled that the country cannot block Malta based ZeTurf from offering horse racing wagers over the internet to French gamblers. The EU supported the decision by le Cour de Cassation. As the European continent continues to push towards borderless market competition between member countries, local government monopolies coming under competitive pressure will heat up.