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Countries around the world are evaluating regulatory strategies for dealing with problems associated with disordered gambling. For example, the countries of Europe are increasingly sharing resources; nevertheless, there is no unified legislation regarding gambling within the European Commission. To help develop comparative information on problem gambling treatment and prevention, the Centre for Addiction Care in Breda, the Netherlands, conducted a comparative survey among treatment centers in Germany, Spain, France, Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland, Great Britain and the Netherlands [1]. Out of 920 organizations that were considered candidates for participating in gambling treatment, 118 responded. The treatment centers surveyed reported the forms of therapy they provide to problem gamblers in Europe to be individual therapy (82%), family therapy (57%), group therapy (54%), and debt restructuring (29%). The clinicians who use a standard diagnostic or screening tool for problem gambling use the DSM-IV, the SOGS, and the ICD-10. Pieter Remmers, the managing director of Jellinek Consultancy, an Amsterdam agency treating all forms of addiction, reports that problem gambling is often characterized as a disorder disproportionately affecting the upper classes [2]. One method used in the Netherlands to encourage treatment for gambling problems is training casino dealers to spot compulsive gamblers. The dealers then notify supervisors, who notify security. Security then contacts the individual to discuss options such as entry bans and other solutions for their problem. Although forms of gambling activities in North America and Europe are similar, prevalence rates and trends can differ. For example, Remmers estimates that 80% of compulsive gamblers developed their problems from playing Amusement-With-Prize games (AWPs) and slots, 15% from traditional table games like roulette and blackjack, and 5% from horse racing and playing the stock market (2). Unlike treatment providers in the United States, Jellinek staff have never encountered a compulsive gambler seeking help for scratch-card gambling. Interestingly, these estimates suggest that slower games that involve increased social contact and social rituals (i.e., informal social controls) may help to protect gamblers from becoming intemperate.

Sources:

1. de Vos, T., Lambeck, S., Op het Veld, G. (1997). Gambling in Europe: A comparative study among eight European countries. Breda, The Netherlands: Centre for Addiction Care
2. Surveying the terrain. (1996, October). International Gaming & Wagering Business Magazine, 17(10), 67, 69.

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