

Pre-Budget Submission 2026

Future-Proofing Financial Security, Stability and Growth for the Sports Sector in Ireland



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Our Vision

Establish a sustainable funding model that ensures
National Governing Bodies, Local Sports Partnerships and
other funded bodies are adequately resourced to attract
and retain high-quality professional staff, thereby fostering
impactful and sustainable sport engagement and strategic
planning while ensuring long term employment security that
supports the work of volunteers all over Ireland.



















The Asks





10% Compound Increase in Core Funding

Traditionally, core funding for sport in Ireland has been delivered on an annual basis, heavily reliant on short-term grants, corporate sponsorships, and individual fundraising. This submission requests a 10% compound annual increase in core funding for Ireland's National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) and other funded bodies over the next three years.



Betting Levy Research

Request for Government commitment to research and publish a report on an additional 1% betting levy for sport. To undertake a formal assessment of the proposed 1% increase to the existing Betting Duty, with a view to designating the additional revenue specifically for participation and community sport. Request to commission an interdepartmental review.

The 2026 Pre-Budget Submission on behalf of the members of the Federation of Irish Sport proposes 2 Key Asks of Government, to overcome the immediate concerns and challenges facing the sector and to support the future sustainability of the sports sector.



MEMBER ORGANISATIONS



13,000 CLUBS 29 88

NATIONAL NETWORK
OF LOCAL SPORTS
PARTNERSHIPS

2.09m



ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Introduction

In Ireland, sport is far more than just a pastime—it's the lifeblood of our communities and helps define us as a nation. It's a force that unites us across generations, backgrounds, and locations. It is in no way elitist, whether it's the camaraderie found in a local sports club or the joy of a weekend run, walk or cycle through the countryside, sport is woven into the very fabric of Irish life.

"Beyond the balance sheet, sport is the social glue that keeps our country together."

Mary O'Connor, CEO of the Federation of Irish Sport (FIS), speaking at the Irish Sport Industry Awards 2025

Sport is for everyone. Yet it is something we are in danger of taking for granted. Sport does not JUST HAPPEN. Sport needs to be planned, managed, financed and delivered.

Government investment in Irish Sport commenced in 1997 - we have come a long way since then. Yet, despite its undeniable value, the full extent of sport's societal impact often goes unrecognised in national policy discussions. Investment in sport is an investment in the health and well-being of the country While we all acknowledge the physical health benefits, we frequently overlook its transformative power in mental health, social inclusion, and community development. It's time to change that narrative and recognise sport and physical activity for what it truly is: a public good essential to Ireland's overall well-being.

The Federation welcomed the Government's continued commitment to Irish sport through the record €230.7 million allocation in Budget 2025. This included €73.4 million for the Community Sport Facilities Fund, €19.3 million for the Large-Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund, €27 million for High Performance sport, and a 4% rise in core funding for National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships to €30 million. These increases sent a clear message that sport matters, and this funding is concrete progress. But it cannot stop here. if we are to unlock the full potential of sport and physical activity for the nation, this must be seen as a starting point rather than a finish line.

The evidence is clear: for every €100 invested in sport the return is €209 while also delivering multiple times its value in health savings, social cohesion, community resilience, and economic activity. Greater investment is not a cost—it is one of the smartest, most futureproofed decisions Government can make.

In 2019, **97,000 disease cases** were prevented in Ireland thanks to regular participation in sport and physical activity, saving the health service an astonishing **€405 million**¹. Across Europe, the annual cost of **physical inactivity** to healthcare systems is a staggering **€80 billion**, driven by preventable conditions like **obesity** and **cardiovascular disease**. In Ireland, **adult obesity** alone costs the country over **€1.13 billion** every year.²

But the impact of sport goes far beyond physical health. It has a profound effect on **mental well-being**, with studies showing that regular participation can reduce **depression** and **anxiety** by up to **30%**.³ It's clear—sport isn't just good for our bodies, it's essential for our minds and our communities.

As the **Federation of Irish Sport** works with over **110 NGBs and LSPs** nationwide, we see firsthand how sport brings people together, breaks down barriers, and builds connections. But despite progress, **significant gaps** in participation remain, particularly among those from disadvantaged backgrounds, people with disabilities, and women. If we are to truly harness the power of sport to build a healthier, more cohesive society, we must prioritise its role in **national strategies** for **health**, **education**, and **social inclusion**.

With the **National Sports Policy 2018–2027** nearing its final years, the time to act is now. We need **greater investment** in core funding, in sports programs, community infrastructure, and the professionals—both paid and volunteer—who make them possible. The benefits are undeniable, and the potential is enormous. Let's ensure that sport is given the support it deserves to continue improving the lives of all Irish citizens.

If we are to continue to develop sport in Ireland at all levels, we must have a greater investment in the core activities of our NGBs, LSPs and other funded bodies and their programmes to encourage participation and in providing the coaches and the other professional personnel necessary to the delivery of those programmes.

In Ireland over **450,000 volunteers** dedicate their time to activities in over 13,000 clubs and community sport groups and without them organised sport as we know it would not exist. Their efforts are worth an estimated economic value of €1.5 billion per annum.⁴ **Over 250,000 of those are coaches who volunteer 1 million hours a week** to Irish Sport. We owe all of them maximum support for their efforts.⁵



A commitment to multi annual funding is essential throughout Irish sport as it provides certainty not alone in our programmes but also in employing the talent required to get the best from our aspiring athletes.

To address existing gaps in participation and access, targeted investment is urgently needed in community sports infrastructure, subsidised programmes for underrepresented groups, transport support for low-income families and people with disabilities.

Recognising sport as a public good within national policy is essential. By prioritising equitable access at every level, the State can unlock the full social value of sport delivering measurable improvements in public health, educational attainment, community resilience, and social cohesion.

We urge policymakers to build on this momentum of investment so far, that began with Ireland's first ever sport policy in 2018 and ensure that funding keeps pace with demand, meets the needs of every community, and empowers sport at all levels-from grassroots participation to world-class performance. The return on investment is undeniable; now is the time to go further. Ireland needs an ambitious, long-term funding model for sport and physical activity that matches the scale of its impact.

KEY PRIORITY ACTIONS TO SUSTAIN THE SECTOR

Inflation-Linked Multi-Annual Core Funding

Compound funding growth year-



New 1% Betting Levy (Total 3%)

Introduce an additional betting levy of 1%



Sport + Health: National Strategy Integration

Integrate sport into public health frameworks



Fair Pay: Unified **Workforce Pay Scales**

Establish standardised pay scales for sports workers



Build Ireland as a Premier Sporting Destination

Promote sports tourism and major events



ASK 1

A 10% compound annual increase in funding for Ireland's National Governing Bodies (NGBs), Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) and other funded bodies over the next three years.

This submission requests a 10% compound annual increase in funding for Ireland's National Governing Bodies (NGBs), Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) and other funded bodies over the next three years, starting from their current baselines of €18.3 million and €11.945 million respectively in 2025.

Combined total €30.245 million increasing by

- €3.025 million in 2026,
- €3.324 million in 2027 and
- €3.655 million in 2028.

This 10% compound increase in core and programmatic funding to support NGBs, LSPs and other funded bodies will be used for:

- · Expanding access and participation,
- · Improving governance and safeguarding,
- · Supporting coaching and volunteer infrastructure,
- · Enabling high-performance athlete development,
- Aligning with national priorities in health, education, inclusion, and community development.

NGBs are key to formalised, structured, and organised club membership, volunteerism, and grassroots participation, elite athlete development, sport governance, and nationallevel competitions, while LSPs are essential in promoting participation and community wellbeing to underrepresented groups and those less likely to participate in sport and physical activity without dedicated outreach. Increased funding across both will improve public health and wellbeing and foster social inclusion, while also driving economic growth and increased tax revenues.

2. Purpose of Funding

To enable NGBs and LSPs to meet rising operational demands and strategic goals, we propose targeted investment in the following areas:

Priority Area	Proposed Use of Funds		
Participation Growth	Community outreach, women-in-sport programmes, rural sport access		
Volunteer & Coach Development	Training, certification, digital platforms		
Governance, Safeguarding & Compliance	Vetting systems, policy rollout, data protection		
High Performance & Talent Pathways	Athlete support, development squads, performance analytics		
Inclusion & Equality	Disability sport programmes, youth leadership, gender equity		
Technology & Innovation	Club management tools, digital learning, analytics systems		
Professional staff	Recruitment, retention and upskilling		

We acknowledge and welcome the increase in funding for sport throughout the lifetime of the National Sports Policy, however Ireland's 2025 allocation of €230.7 million to sport represents 0.07% of GNI*, while broader spending on recreational and sporting services amounts to 0.16% of GNI* which is below the EU average of 0.4% of GDP (Eurostat https://doi.org/10.2908/GOV_10A_EXP). As such, this indicates that Ireland could invest more in sport and recreation to match European peers.

GNI* ('modified GNI') adjusts for the economic activities of multinational corporations, providing a more accurate reflection of income available to Irish residents.

The Programme for Government 2025–2029 reinforces their continued commitment to investing in and supporting the sector.

Political Context

Sport continues to be recognised by the Irish Government as a vital component of national policy, contributing significantly to public health, social inclusion, and economic development.

The Programme for Government 2025–2029:

- "Invest in sport and physical activity infrastructure to promote healthier, more active communities and support grassroots participation."
- "Support National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships to ensure access and opportunity for all, including disadvantaged and disabled communities."
- "Increase funding for high-performance sport to enhance Ireland's competitive success on the international stage."
- "Integrate sport into broader health and wellbeing strategies to tackle chronic disease and improve quality of life."

However, despite these commitments, **Ireland's public spending on sport remains significantly below European norms**, undermining the capacity of NGBs, LSPs and other funded bodies to meet rising demand and policy objectives not just for the sport policy but across government departments. Aligning investment levels with EU averages would mark a transformative shift toward sustainable, high-impact sport development.

The Federation is calling on Government to implement multi-annual funding for sport with a 10% compound annual increase in core funding over the next three years.

Funding Proposal and Financial Projections Proposed Funding Growth (2025–2028)

Year	NGB Funding (€m)	NGB Annual Increase (€m)	LSP Funding (€m)	LSP Annual Increase (€m)
2025	18.30	-	11.945	-
2026	20.13	+1.83	13.14	+1.195
2027	22.14	+2.01	14.454	+1.314
2028	24.35	+2.21	15.899	+1.445
Total	over 3 years	€6.05m		€3.95m



CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Public investment in sport and recreation is 0.16% of GNI, which is below the EU average of 0.4% of GDP (Eurostat, 2023).

0.16%

BILLION



Sports volunteering in Ireland is estimated to be worth €1.5 billion annually. This figure underscores the immense social and economic benefits derived from the invaluable contributions of volunteers across the Irish sporting landscape.

€3.3 **BILLION**

Irish households spend €3.3 billion annually on sports and related goods.



Sport and related activities support over 64,000 full-time equivalent jobs, contributing to 2.8% of overall employment.



NGBs oversee grassroots participation, volunteerism, elite pathways, competition structures, and sport governance across the country.



€3.7 BILLION

The Irish sports economy is estimated to be worth €3.7 billion annually, representing 1.4% of the country's Gross Value Added (GVA), demonstrating convincing evidence of fiscal return.

Physical activity reduces chronic diseases and mental health pressures, easing the burden on the HSE and supporting national wellbeing targets. It is estimated that over 97,000 cases of disease are prevented due to sports and physical activity annually, resulting in healthcare cost savings of nearly €0.5 billion.





On behalf of our members we are calling on the following actions from Government:



1. Commit to a 10% compound annual increase (€10m in total) in funding for both NGBs, LSPs and other funded bodies over 2025–2028. This €10m compound increase over the next 3 years would be a starting point to reach the EU average.



Align sport funding with national strategies
in health, inclusion, economic development,
and climate action.



 Establish transparent reporting and impact frameworks, building public confidence in how funding delivers outcomes.



4. Support cross-departmental policy integration with health, education, transport, and local government to maximise value from investment.



Ask 2:

Request for Government Commitment to Research and Publish a Report on an Additional 1% Betting Levy for Sport

Ireland currently imposes a **2% tax on betting stakes** which is applicable to both retail and online bets with the revenue derived from this levy flowing to the Exchequer.

In 2023, this 2% betting duty generated approximately €103 million in revenue.6

Based on recent betting duty receipts, the creation of an additional 1% levy is estimated to yield c. €40–50 million extra per annum for sports. In 2023, the 2% duty generated €103 million; therefore the creation of an additional 1% could generate roughly half that amount. The intent is that this new revenue would be "earmarked specifically for participation and community sport" effectively creating a new funding stream to supplement government sports budgets.

To give some international context, France and Portugal are frequently referenced as examples where betting tax is structured to support sports directly. In Portugal, for instance, a substantial portion of sports betting levies is channelled to the national sports system, most notably to football. According to data from the FAI, the Portuguese Football Federation (FPF) received 60% of all betting levy collections in Portugal over the last five years, amounting to approximately €146 million. This funding now represents roughly 25–30% of the FPF's annual revenues, enabling reinvestment at all levels of the game.



We respectfully request that the Minister and his department lead on a request to Government to Commit to research and publish a report on an additional 1% Betting Levy for Sport:



1. Undertake a formal assessment of the proposed 1% increase to the existing Betting Duty, with a view to designating the additional revenue specifically for participation and community sport.



2. Commission an interdepartmental review, led jointly by the Department of Finance and the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport, in collaboration with Sport Ireland and other relevant stakeholders.



3. Publish a report within 6 to 9 months outlining:

- The fiscal, legal, and ethical feasibility of the proposed amendment to Section 67 of the Finance Act 2002.
 This should include consideration of the social responsibility of reinvesting betting revenues in community health and wellbeing through sport.
- Projected annual revenue from the additional 1% levy.
- A framework for administering the designated funds, including potential models for a Sports Investment Fund.
- Potential social and economic impacts of increased participation in sport resulting from the additional funding stream.
- · Risks, constraints, and implementation considerations.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS/APPENDIX:

Ask 2: Additional Betting Levy

Legislative Considerations:

The proposal to introduce an additional 1% betting levy, on top of the existing 2% Betting Duty, would require targeted amendments to existing primary and secondary legislation. The legal basis for the current Betting Duty framework is found in the Finance Act 2002, specifically Chapter 1 of Part 2, which sets out the obligations for bookmakers (including remote operators) to pay duty on bets accepted from persons in the State. The rate of Betting Duty is prescribed under Section 67 of the Finance Act 2002, which currently provides for a 2% levy on the amount of each bet placed with a licensed bookmaker, whether in person or via remote means.¹²

To implement the proposed increase, the primary legislative amendment would involve altering Section 67 of the Finance Act 2002 to raise the duty from 2% to 3%. An additional subsection could be inserted to earmark 1% of the new total rate specifically for transfer to a designated Sports Development Fund. Alternatively, the Act could be amended to provide that a portion of the overall Betting Duty collected be diverted via ministerial order or regulation to such a fund. If the Government seeks to ringfence this 1% explicitly for sport, a new statutory basis would likely be required, modelled on structures such as the Social Impact Fund established under the Gambling Regulation Act 2024.¹³

Further amendments may be needed to Section 68 of the Finance Act 2002, which outlines exemptions from Betting Duty. These exemptions include bets placed on-course at horse racing or greyhound meetings and certain totalisator bets. Consideration should be given to whether the additional 1% would apply uniformly or only to non-exempt betting activity.

In addition to primary legislation, supporting regulations would require revision. The Betting Duty and Betting Intermediary Duty Regulations 2015 (S.I. No. 341/2015) govern the return and payment process for duty liabilities. These would need to be updated to reflect the new rate and the allocation mechanism for the earmarked portion. Revenue's Betting Duty Returns system administered via Revenue Online Services (ROS) would also require technical modification to record, process and enforce the higher rate and to report the ringfenced 1% allocation.¹⁵

The introduction of a ringfenced component would also necessitate the establishment of a dedicated Sports Development Fund through either new legislation or a statutory amendment. The relevant provisions in the Gambling Regulation Act 2024 (Sections 50–57) offer a legislative model for how such a fund might be administered. That Act established a Social Impact Fund to receive mandatory contributions from gambling licensees and outlined how it would be managed, disbursed, and audited under ministerial oversight.16

Finally, from an administrative and compliance perspective, changes to Section 78 of the Finance Act 2002, which governs the de-registration of bookmaking premises for non-compliance, may not be necessary, but operational enforcement guidance would need updating to reflect the new rate. Revenue's compliance manual also provides for enforcement mechanisms in cases of non- payment or underpayment, which would automatically extend to the higher duty amount.¹⁷

In summary, the introduction of an additional 1% betting levy would require an amendment to Section 67 of the Finance Act 2002, accompanying changes to secondary regulations, and potentially new enabling legislation to establish and govern the administration of a ringfenced sports fund. Cross-departmental coordination with the Department of Finance and the Revenue Commissioners would be critical to ensure the legislative and operational viability of the proposed measure.

Policy and Political Considerations:

The Department of Finance historically has been cautious about increasing the betting duty too rapidly. An attempt to double the betting duty from 1% to 2% in 2019 raised additional revenue but met resistance from the betting industry. In this case, however, the argument is bolstered by political and public support, since the funds would be visibly supporting community sport and health.

During a Dáil Éireann debate in April 2023, it was noted "The Government has spoken. No increase in the betting levy..." at that time suggesting that in Budget 2024, the Department of Finance declined to raise the levy. B However, by late 2023 and into 2024, momentum built for revisiting the idea. The former Minister for Agriculture, and now Minister of State for Sport, Charlie McConalogue unintentionally highlighted the success of racing's funding which, as an Irish Times analysis pointed out, "effectively made the FAI's point for them" about supporting other sports. In other words, the strong defence of racing's subsidy underscored that similar investment could yield dividends in soccer and beyond, without "waging war" on any sector. In the sports of the strong war on any sector.

From a fiscal perspective, €40–50 million directed to sport via a levy would be a significant new funding line. The National Sports Policy (2018–2027) committed to doubling sports investment, which has seen increases in annual funding for sporting bodies, high-performance sport, and facilities. Yet much of that has come as direct Exchequer support. A designated betting levy contribution would diversify sport funding sources.

To Conclude

Since the introduction of Ireland's first National Sports Policy in 2018, there has been sustained investment in sport and significant progress has been made in both high performance and sports capital funding. Ireland is on track to exceed the 50% target for active participation set out in the National Sports Policy with current figures showing 49% of the population now take part in sport weekly which is a record high. The multi-annual funding model introduced for the last Olympic and Paralympic cycle reaped dividends in the Paris Games. Team Ireland enjoyed the largest ever Olympic medal success at the Paris Games taking home a record 7 medals (four gold and three bronze), finishing an impressive 19th on the medal table. In total 133 athletes competed in over 18 sport codes. Medal success continued for Team Ireland at the Paralympic Games where 6 medals were won including one gold, three silver and two bronze.

Ireland cannot deliver safe, inclusive, and successful sport without strong, well-funded NGBs and LSPs. They are the core infrastructure through which all government sport objectives — health, youth development, gender equity, and international excellence — are realised. This proposal makes a clear, evidence-based case for strategic investment in Irelands sport systems to ensure Irish sport continues to thrive at every level.

Our sporting NGBs and LSPs are responsible for the people and programmes that drive participation from grassroots all the way through to high performance. Core funding allows NGBs, LSPs and other funded bodies recruit additional staff and retain existing staff, run programmes, and develop coaching to meet the growing demands and reduce barriers to entry into their sport. Many have developed their organisational structure to reflect the operational demands of their sports administration to ensure the standards of development, education, ethics, equity, inclusivity, diversity, coaching, promotion, safeguarding, and good governance are upheld.

The long-term societal benefits of investing in sport cannot be underestimated and seen purely through a recreational lens. Research confirms that the **health benefits** through increased physical activity reduces long-term pressure on the HSE by lowering rates of heart disease, obesity, depression, and type 2 diabetes.



In the current climate of social unrest, sport is a vehicle for **social inclusion and integration**. Our LSP network operates in communities/constituencies nationwide to reach underserved, rural, and low-income, multi-ethnic communities, breaking down barriers to participation.

On a local level the **community development** of sport builds social capital, community pride, and civic engagement. While nationally our **international competitiveness inspires future generations** to strive towards Olympic and Paralympic pathways and elite-level performance.

Through enhanced investment in local sport infrastructure, clubs can promote active transport and reduces emissions from car-reliant activity models, complying with our commitment to climate and Sustainable Development Goals.

A step-change in the level of funding allocated to Sport in Budget 2026 is essential for building programmes, retaining key personnel, and attracting quality coaches and staff. By adopting a multi-annual funding model and a compound increase of 10% over three years, the Federation argues that the Government would empower the sector with the certainty and financial security needed to plan strategically and deliver meaningful long-term outcomes.



APPENDIX 1:

List of FIS Members

NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES

Active Disability Ireland American Football Ireland Angling Council of Ireland **Archery Ireland** Athletics Ireland **Badminton Ireland** Basketball Ireland Bol Chumann Na hEireann Cairn Community Games Canoeing Ireland Cheer Sport Ireland Comhairle Liathróid Láimhe na hÉireann Cricket Ireland Croquet Association of Ireland Cycling Ireland Deaf Sports Ireland Diving Ireland Fencing Ireland Football Association of Ireland Gaelic Athletic Association Golf Ireland Gymnastics Ireland Hockey Ireland Horse Sport Ireland Ice Skating Association of Ireland Inline Hockey Ireland Ireland Active

Irish Amateur Wrestling Association Irish Athletic Boxing Association Irish Clay Target Shooting Association Irish Flying Disk Association Irish Ice Hockey Association Irish Indoor Bowling Association Irish Judo Association Irish Lawn Bowls Irish Martial Arts Commission Irish Olympic Handball Association Irish Rugby Football Union Irish Sailing Irish Surfing Association Irish Tae Kwon Do Association Irish Wheelchair Association Sport Ladies Gaelic Football Association Motorcycling Ireland Motorsport Ireland Mountaineering Ireland National Aero Club of Ireland National Coarse Fishing Federation of Ireland Official National Amateur Karate Association of Ireland Olympic Federation of Ireland Orienteering Ireland

Paralympics Ireland Pentathlon Ireland Pitch and Putt Union of Ireland Racquetball Ireland Rowing Ireland Rugby League Ireland Snooker & Billards Ireland (RIBSA) **Snowsports Ireland** Softball Ireland Special Olympics Ireland Speleological Union of Ireland Squash Ireland Student Sport Ireland Swim Ireland Table Tennis Ireland Target Shooting Ireland Tennis Ireland Tenpin Ireland The Camogie Association The Irish Waterski & Wakeboard **Federation** Triathlon Ireland Tug of War Ireland Twirl Ireland Federation Vision Sports Ireland Volleyball Ireland Water Safety Ireland Weightlifting Ireland

LOCAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS

Carlow Sports Partnership
Cavan Sports Partnership
Clare Sports Partnership
Cork County Sports Partnership
Donegal Sports Partnership
Dublin City Sports Network
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Sports
Partnership
Fingal Sports Partnership
Galway Sports Partnership
Kerry Sports Partnership
Kildare Sports Partnership

Ireland Lacrosse

Kilkenny Sports Partnership
Laois Sports Partnership
Leitrim Sports Partnership
Limerick Sports Partnership
Longford LSP
Louth Sports Partnership
Mayo Sports Partnership
Meath Sports Partnership
Monaghan Sports Partnership
Tipperary Sports Partnership
Offaly Sports Partnership
Roscommon Sports Partnership

Sligo Sports Partnership South Dublin Sports Partnership Waterford Sports Partnership Westmeath Sports Partnership Wexford Sports Partnership Wicklow Sports Partnership

Associate MembersSporting Pride Transplant Sport Ireland



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- Federation of Irish Sport Briefs Oireachtas Members on Urgent Funding and Policy Needs Federation of Irish Sport Irish Sport Pressing the Case for More with Government Sport for Business
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 FAI choose Portuguese route to justify slice of betting tax largesse
 Finance Act 2002, Section 67 (as amended). See also Betting Duty Returns and Payments Compliance Procedures, Revenue, June 2024, pp. 5-6.
 Gambling Regulation Act 2024, Sections 50-54.
 Finance Act 2002, Section 68 (as amended by Section 50 of the Finance Act 2017).
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