

“We note with surprise the decision of the SGA, with no prior notice, to issue fines against a number of sports betting operators, including our Swedish facing-brand, <https://sports.bwin.se/sv/sports>. Having taken legal advice, we confirm that we will be lodging an appeal.

“The fine against the Group relates to three under-19 Swedish football fixtures that took place in April this year, in which the eventual line-ups featured a narrow majority of players under the age of 18. Whilst, post-event this may appear a potential transgression, at the time of creating the markets on these fixtures, GVC had no way of knowing this would be the case. Of these fixtures referenced, only a single bet was taken across all three matches.

“In common with leading betting operators, across multiple jurisdictions, GVC takes a decision on which events it is permitted to offer bets on at a competition level rather than on an individual fixture basis. This reflects the reality that line-ups are frequently only made available shortly before an event. Our explicit policy is to only offer bets that are predominantly intended for participants above the age of 18. This approach is regarded as accepted practice in multiple jurisdictions. For this reason, the Group accepted bets on under-19 fixtures but does not do so for under-18 fixtures.

“Immediately upon being notified by the SGA of the issue in April 2019, the Group took the decision to cease providing markets in Sweden for all under-19 fixtures, while we sort to clarify with the regulator the application of the regulation. We provided the regulator with a detailed rationale for our policy and requested a meeting to discuss the issue. To date we have received no response, nor have we received any additional guidance. We continue to believe that maintaining an active dialogue between operators and regulators is the best way to implement regulation in line with its intended objectives.

“As well as challenging the basis for the SGA’s decision, GVC also questions the disproportionate size of the fine issued, both in terms of the single bet taken on the fixtures in question and in the revenue calculation used to quantify it.

“GVC is wholly committed to ensuring the integrity of sport and to protecting minors. While we intend to appeal this decision, we believe the best approach is to build a constructive dialogue with SGA to ensure an effective regulatory framework which is fair to all parties.”