



## To Set the Record Straight

Last month, a lawmaker in Ireland asserted that the country's National Lottery has been responsible for 40% of the complaints the Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland (ASAI) has fielded. However, Sinn Féin's Brian Stanley missed the mark with his comment, and the ASAI wants to set the record straight.

Misinformation, whether to support a certain narrative or because of an error in calculation, can be fatal. The sensitive nature of gambling conversations going on everywhere requires that only verified and correct data be disseminated.

Ireland, as are many countries, is currently updating its gambling laws. Exaggerated information could have a permanent impact on the industry and inadvertently alter its trajectory permanently.

### Rewriting The Script

The Irish Examiner explained in an article today that Stanley, the chair of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), made his remarks during a "combative" committee meeting last month. In discussions about how the National Lottery spends unclaimed funds, the conversation turned to the ASAI and consumers' complaints against the Lottery.

At the time, Stanley asked the CEO of the lottery regulator, Carol Boate, if she knew that 40% of the complaints the organization had received were about the lottery. She said that she did not. However, just mentioning the high level of complaints would be enough to draw unwanted and unnecessary attention to any subject.

However, the figure wasn't accurate – it wasn't even close to the actual number. Following up on the supposed revelation, Orla Twomey, the CEO of the ASAI, penned a letter to Stanley. In it, she asked him to strike his comments and set the record straight according to the actual figures.

Those figures, wrote Twomey, show that only 3% of the 994 complaints Ireland's advertising industry self-regulator fielded were about the National Lottery. That's a far cry from the 40% Stanley mentioned.

There's no information regarding where Stanley got his information. There's a reference to an unidentified online news article as the potential source, but nothing solid. However, Twomey wants the Dáil to update its official record of the conversations that took place, as well as register the correct data in its permanent record.

## Lottery Changes Coming

While Stanley's data may have been egregiously off the mark, correcting the records doesn't mean the National Lottery won't soon undergo some fundamental changes. Lottery players spent over \$1 billion last year. But not all of them claimed their prizes.

Any of the unspent money goes back to the National Lottery, which should use it for community projects. Premier Lotteries Ireland, which operates the National Lottery, says it complies with the regulation. But some legislators feel it's time for a change.

A recent report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Ireland's financial watchdog, claimed Premier Lotteries has accumulated about €124 million (US\$131.71 million) in unclaimed prizes. A significant percentage of that has not ended up in community projects.

Instead, according to its own admission, Premier Lotteries has used some of the money for marketing and other business activity. However, the organization asserts that these other activities are also community projects.

Certain lawmakers don't see it that way. They're fighting for changes in the legislative framework that guides Premier Lotteries or any other lottery operator. They want greater transparency in how the company operates, as well as greater control on the part of regulators. In the current environment, they're likely to get both.

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