

# Promotion of illegal online gambling on social networks

## Abstract

This thesis focuses on the issue of promoting illegal online gambling through paid advertising on social networks among its Czech users. The starting point is the growing importance of the online environment within the gambling industry in the Czech Republic, where more than half of total revenues already come from online channels. This trend highlights the need for effective regulation, with the fight against illegal gambling remaining one of the key challenges. The thesis is based on the finding that operators of illegal gambling may resort to paid advertising on social networks to attract new players. These platforms represent a highly attractive advertising environment due to their broad user base. The empirical part of the thesis uses a newly available tool for public oversight – Meta Ad Library, introduced under the European Digital Services Act (DSA). Using a predefined set of keywords, ads related to online gambling were identified and analyzed. The results show that advertisements promoting unauthorized gambling games do indeed appear on Facebook and Instagram, and to a degree that was assessed as non-negligible. Ads primarily reach men from age 25 to 45, a demographic in which both the prevalence of gambling and the rate of problem gambling are significantly higher than in the general population in the Czech Republic. The legal part of the thesis assesses how effectively current Czech advertising regulations are able to respond to this phenomenon. The analysis indicates that public regulation in this area has limited impact. The main obstacles to effective enforcement include difficulties in identifying advertisers, limited liability of the social networks service provider, and likely insufficient speed in restricting the dissemination of harmful content. The thesis highlights the potential of new technical tools, such as ad archives, for research and regulatory oversight in the field of online advertising. The findings of this thesis may serve as a starting point for further research focused on the behavior of users exposed to illegal advertising, or as a basis for proposals to amend the legal regulation of digital gambling advertising.

**Key words:** social networks advertising, illegal online gambling, empirical study