

ECC-Spain participates in the European Commission's ADWiseOnline campaign to protect young online gamblers from unfair practices

The campaign will run until 16 February and will help to raise awareness of manipulative marketing practices used in online gaming, as well as players' rights.

Madrid, 16 January 2025. The European Commission - in cooperation with the European Consumer Centres Network ([ECC-Net](#)) and the Safer Internet Centres Network ([SIC](#)) - has launched the [ADWiseOnline 2025](#) campaign, which will run until 16 February, to raise awareness among citizens, especially parents with children, about the marketing techniques commonly used in the online gaming industry to 'trap' players and manipulate them into making purchases under pressure.

Among other issues, ADWiseOnline 2025 addresses aspects such as the design of online games designed to 'hook' players with the use, for example, of so-called 'dark patterns'. This is a technique used in the digital environment that affects the user experience and whose purpose is to manipulate the behaviour and decisions of people during the time they interact not only in online games but also on websites, apps, or social networks and that can affect the processing of users' personal data.

Another of the techniques used are 'loot boxes', random reward mechanisms that provide exclusive access to certain content in exchange for payment. In relation to the use of these instruments, it should be noted that in June 2024, the [Spanish government](#) approved a draft organic law to improve the protection and security of minors in digital environments, which includes the express prohibition of children and adolescents from accessing these 'loot boxes'.

The campaign also addresses the FOMO or 'fear of missing out', which marketing also uses to create a sense of urgency or scarcity - sometimes false - by pressuring the user to perform a purchase with messages such as 'limited time offer' or 'last items in stock'.

All of these techniques negatively affect younger gamblers, as their brains are still developing, meaning they have less impulse control and do not fully understand the value of money. Moreover, studies have shown a link between gambling and gambling addiction, financial stress and even mental health problems. Hence the EU's commitment to have an up-to-date legal framework to ensure consumer protection, for example through the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive.

The AdWiseOnline campaign therefore aims not only to raise awareness of the problem of manipulative practices used in games, but also to empower young people and those who care for them with knowledge about their rights as consumers. To this end, a series of activities and educational materials are available [online](#) for children, young people, parents, carers, teachers, educators, social workers and the general public. Videos, articles, podcasts, [webinars](#), collaborations with influencers and many other activities will take place throughout the duration of the campaign.

Source of information: [EU](#).