



# **Target Groups for Debt Advice:**

**People with gambling debts**

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**Aura Pylkkänen (FIN)**



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# Introduction

- Guarantee Foundation is a non-profit social welfare organization that helps prevent and solve financial and debt problems in Finnish households
- In addition to our work, financial and debt counselling services are also provided by the state legal aid offices
- The number of clients who gamble has been rising sharply
- We have recently launched a new joint development project “Gambling with balance” (*Rahat pelissä*) with Sosped-Foundation

# Gambling in Finland

- Finland is among the top five gambling nations in the world
- Gambling operations are run by the state-owned company Veikkaus
- The aim of the monopoly system is to restrain social and health related harms and gambling profits are used to support public interest activities
- Gambling consumption is heavily concentrated: 2.5 % of gambling players spend half of the money spent on games
- A recently made gambling policy program recognizes the importance of financial literacy as part of harm prevention and reduction

# Financial harms & concerns

- Gamblers have often accumulated more debt than other clients, often in a short period of time
- Gamblers are looking for a quick and easy solution for their debts, financial concerns are often the reason for seeking help
- Feelings of anxiety and shame as well as lack of knowledge often lead to attempts to solve the situation independently
- Financial concerns of problem gamblers can be left unaddressed by treatment professionals
- Family and friends might not recognize financial abuse

# Dealing with gambling debts

- Treatment and support services focus on money management, possibilities for debt restructuring are evaluated in debt advice services
- It is important to guarantee access to correct information and at the same time maintain motivation to live with burdening debts
- Important aspects with debt restructuring are right timing, identification of root causes and sufficient support
- Relapses, crime-based debt and the unclear role of diagnoses can cause challenges with debt restructuring

# Financial recovery

- Refers to a comprehensive approach: securing everyday life, mapping out gambling debt and dealing with financial scarcity
- Manageability, meaningfulness, comprehensibility: living a decent life despite the financial harms caused by gambling
- Twisted financial behavioral models and attitudes towards money need to be addressed and re-adjusted
- Peer groups can be highly advantageous in resolving the financial troubles caused by gambling: people receive both practical advice as well as emotional support

# New approaches

- GameTreatmentPath (*Pelihoitopolku*)-project:
  - Enhancing multiprofessional cooperation, developing timely debt advice and better servicepaths
- Gambling with balance (*Rahat pelissä*)-project:
  - Embracing experience knowledge, incorporating a notion of financial rehabilitation between financial crisis and financial recovery
  - Encouraging people to take an active role with managing their finances and raising awareness of the complex role of money in the realm of gambling



# **Provision of an European Platform for the Prevention of Over-indebtedness by the Increase Accessibility and the Improvement of effectiveness of Debt Advice for Citizens (PEPPI)**

Thank you!

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