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O&O REPORT HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANT RISKS OF A BAN ON GEO-BLOCKING FOR SPORT CONTENT

Oliver & Ohlbaum Associates Ltd (“O&O”) have published a report on ‘*The impact of potential changes to geo-blocking regulation on sport*’*, highlighting the risks of extending a ban on geo-blocking for sports content.

The report concludes that, moving forward, the exclusion of audiovisual services including sports rights from the Geo-blocking Regulation should be retained to avoid significant damage to the level of consumer access to sports across Europe.

O&O’s report has been produced in the context of an evaluation currently being undertaken by the European Commission on the impact of the Geo-blocking Regulation (Regulation 2018/302), and whether to extend the ban on geo-blocking to include audiovisual services, bringing sports rights into this scope.

The analysis conducted clearly demonstrates that the current system of selling rights territorially and maintaining exclusivity leads to the best outcome for consumers, both in terms of price and choice. Furthermore, it remains the best way to ensure funding levels to maintain the competitiveness of European sports.

If the ban on geo-blocking were extended, all European sports rights licenses would effectively become pan-EU, and broadcasters would respond to this new competitive dynamic. The result would be a highly fragmented landscape for sports content, whereby consumers would have to get services from multiple territories, including taking multiple subscriptions, to retain access to the breadth of sports coverage they currently enjoy. Furthermore, a total of 103 million people in 11 territories which are not home to top-tier competitions, could be exposed to higher prices to access coverage of many top-tier sport from overseas. The overall outcome would run counter to the Commission’s objectives for introducing the Geo-blocking Regulation as it would reduce consumer choice and increase prices.

For sport bodies and competitions’ organisers, 69% of rights income would be at risk. A loss in investment and resulting decline in the quality of sport available to consumers could trigger a downward spiral for European sports and a negative impact on both spectating and participation.

Mark Lichtenhein, the Chairman of the Sports Rights Owners’ Coalition said, “SROC Members are very grateful to O&O for producing such a comprehensive report with forensic analysis of the economics underpinning the sports broadcast ecosystem. We trust that policy makers will read its conclusions carefully, in order to appreciate how individual European broadcasters shape the sports rights market in the interest of consumers across the EU.”

The full report is available [here](#)

*O&O were commissioned by the Sports Rights Owner Coalition (“SROC”) to provide independent research into how the audiovisual sector, particularly sports, would be affected by potential changes to the geo-blocking regulation.

About Oliver & Ohlbaum Associates Ltd

Based in London – the world’s leading hub for the creative industries and finance – Oliver & Ohlbaum Associates (O&O) was founded in 1995 to help investors, media owners, tech companies, policy makers and sports bodies understand and respond to the emerging digital revolution.