

## Gambling: the Region is determined to contrast the urgency

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Gambling continues to be one of the most serious social alarms in recent years. A contributing factor is also the recent shooting in front of Palazzo Chigi at the hands of a man who very likely – together with other discomforts – had a gambling addiction, the issue reappeared on the agenda in the national debate. The Lombardy Region has decided that staying there looking is no longer possible. “The gambling addiction,” said the president Roberto Maroni, “is a subject on which I want to commit. In the coming days I will meet the competent assessors to see how we can take action to tighten up the possibility of spread of these machines that are likely to lead to serious situations.”

With more than 700 specialized companies, Lombardy is the Italian region in which gambling is played the most. In the top ten of the most active provinces there is Monza and Brianza. In the last year, the specialized, in homes and local units, that dedicate themselves to the field of gaming and betting have increased by 32.7%, from 52 in 2010 to 69 in 2011, an increase of 9.3% (data from the Chamber of Commerce of Milan). Also in 2011, the province of Pavia ranks first in Italy and played both as an amount per capita and a percentage of provincial GDP spent on games. Varese has experienced an increase of the average annual per capita played amount of around 25%, with a per capita amount played of 1,161 euro.

The debate on gambling is not a novelty, however, between the walls of the Regional Council. Formerly a year ago, the Democratic Party had submitted a draft law. “Our proposal,” explains Alessandro Alfieri, democratic leader, “calls for the establishment of a special observatory on the spread of the phenomenon and operational units specialized in the treatment of addiction to gambling within the departments for addictions of ASL. We also submit the obligation for managing entities or dealers of slot machines to provide the equipment of a reader of the regional health card, to prevent its use to minors.”

Even the Lega Nord has announced the will of introducing a bill, on which it is working on, focusing also on the issue of health care costs. The regulation of the game, however, is under state jurisdiction, and for this reason the PDL is pushing for the parliamentary road, perhaps with an initial proposal of the Regions.

Nevertheless, the region is not the first institutional level who is worrying about the phenomenon. As often happens in these cases, since the people which suffer the strongest consequences are first of all people with addictions and their families, the municipalities are those who live at the forefront the difficulties in managing the phenomenon. For this reason, also in the province of Varese, several initiatives have already born precisely from the councils.

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