



## THE ECONOMICS OF SPORTS BETTING

**Mehmet Kargün,  
Yavuz Selim Ağaoğlu,  
Mustafa Kaya**  
Gaziosmanpaşa University,  
Faculty of Sport Sciences,  
Tokat, Turkey

### **Abstract:**

It is known that the concept of betting was seen even in prehistoric times. It can be said that betting has emerged with the process people started to live collectively, specifically with sport organizations. With modern times, sports have been involved in a process from the field to the stock market, and inevitably with the 19th century, betting and sports have almost moved together. Today, in the general context, the concept of betting can be seen in every field of sports. As a result of IBIS World's research dated September 2019, the sports betting industry made a profit of \$ 221 billion in 2019. This study provides information about the economics of sport betting, the historical development of betting, factors affecting participation in betting, definition of betting and betting in Turkey.

**Keywords:** sports betting, sports betting industry, betting games

### **1. Introduction**

Since the first ages, people have felt the obligation to organize in various ways to meet their needs. As the ages progressed and new consumption techniques developed, economic organization has undergone profound changes and new ideas have been put forward to meet the needs better and to bring more prosperity to societies (Devecioğlu, 2004).

The most important of these thoughts is globalization. Globalization, which has a very different and rich span of meaning, briefly refers to “*the integration of some common values in economic, political and cultural fields, crossing national borders and spreading across the world*”. While economy, which is one of the most important factors of globalization, shows its effects in different fields, it has started to show its influence effectively in the sports sector towards the end of 20th century. With the effect of technological developments, sport economy continues to expand and develop rapidly. Undoubtedly, football has the biggest share in this sector.

Football has become synonymous with money and advertising. Thus, hundreds of sectors were born. Everyone benefits from the economic aspect of football. Businesses that produce sports equipment, tourism organizations, food producers, television organizations, newspapers and hundreds of organizations that we cannot name here take a share of the economic share caused by football. Not only individuals or organizations, but also countries in which matches are played have great economic benefits (Devecioğlu, 2004).

In today's world, one of the most profitable fields of sport economy is betting and games of chance. Especially football bets are the most striking of these games. Games of chance and betting are becoming an increasing habit of both the world and our country. The interest in games of chance is increasing day by day in our country and individuals who are interested in these games spend money on these regularly just like paying taxes. Among these games, İddia is the most talked of these games with its increasing popularity. From 2004 when İddia started in Turkey until 2018, 90 billion TL of revenue has been recorded (Koçyiğit, 2018).

In terms of its existence, sports betting has created effects on people such as high income, entertainment, thrill, dreams and the realization of these dreams. The rapidly developing understanding of leisure time has turned big races and sport into an industry. Due to this change, sports betting products have become a serious consumption sector with the effect of mass media and advertisements (Çelik, 2016).

### **1.1 The concept of betting**

Betting games are games that are played on the basis of predicting the outcome of an event or how the event will develop and the result depends partly on the skill of the participant and partly on chance. Apart from chance, the knowledge and skills of the player have an important role in winning in all kinds of competitions, events and sport games (like iddia) (Yaşar, 2011).

### **1.2 Historical development of betting**

The origins of betting in the world go back to prehistoric times. It is known that the first betting in history was made in the Olympic Games in 676 B.C. by Greeks. Gladiators then fought to entertain the people in the Olympics and the people watching them made predictions about who would win and who would lose. In the middle age, betting became more common. Cock fighting took place especially in betting offices established in England. Later on, betting became widespread in the world and was organized for various competitions such as horse racing and football. With the contribution of cable technology, betting started to be watched live from betting offices and with the invention of television betting became a popular game in the whole world. In 1920s, England, which is known as the mother land of football, released a game similar to Spor Toto game in Turkey and this game became a much loved game among European countries (especially Switzerland and Germany). As the sport industry developed, companies that offered new betting opportunities around the world were established. A great competition developed

between the largest 10 betting companies of the world and thousands of big and small betting companies and the sector continues to develop with all its speed (Koçyiğit, 2018).

### 1.3 Factors influencing participation in sport betting games

In sport betting games, there are economic, social and psychological factors influencing participation of the players in betting games. Components such as the learning process, attitudes and perceptions and belief factors; the community, social class, culture the individual participates in or is the member of; the reference group the individual interacts with and the individual's family also influence the players. Motives such as entertainment, ability, thrill, the wish to fight, self-proof, making friends, socializing are also among important factors which influence player behaviours in sport betting games and the phenomena of pleasure, satisfaction and joy come into play significantly in player satisfaction. Lifestyle can also affect the player. People try to understand why they do things and what these things mean for themselves and for others. People can also play betting games to socialize. With individuals' wish to socialize, their adaptation process to the society is completed. The concept of motivation also affects participation among psychological factors. Motivation includes a process which starts, guides, maintains and stops the targeted behaviour index in the player. It can be said that motivation is the largest power that allows one to take sincere pleasure (Çelik, 2016).

In a study conducted by Alp Çelik (2016), the reasons of adults for betting are given in the table below.

**Table 1:** The reasons for adults' betting

	f	%	Valid %
To make money	66	31,6	35,9
Financial difficulties	34	16,3	18,5
To pay debts	26	12,4	14,1
Curiosity	1	0,5	0,5
Entertainment	26	12,4	14,1
Prize transfer	7	3,3	3,8
Entertainment	11	5,3	6,0
To get away from stress	13	6,2	7,1

When the table is examined, it can be seen that the participants were given more than one choice to choose from a multiple of choices. When the distribution of reasons for betting are analysed, the participants stated that they played betting games to make money with a rate of 31,6%, due to financial difficulties with a rate of 16,3%, to pay debts with a rate of 12,4% and for entertainment with a rate of 12,4% (Çelik, 2016).

In a study conducted by Neighbors et al., it was stated that there were 16 different reasons which led university students to participate in betting games. These were money, entertainment, thrill, social/spending time/boredom, winning, competition, convenience, risk, skill (development learning), interest, coping, challenging, drinking, chasing luck (previous losses). Among these factors, those which motivated most were found as to make money, entertainment, social (interacting with friends or making new friends),

thrill and to decrease boredom. It was stated that the primary reason was to make money for 42,7% of the participants, social reasons for 11,2%, thrill for 7,3% and other reasons for 23%. In addition, secondary factors which led university students to bet were getting away from problems or coping with problems, making up previous losses or winning, luck and challenge (İlçin, 2017).

## **2. The economics of sports betting**

The industrial transformation, which was experienced in almost all sport branches, especially football, since the beginning of 1900s, has made sports a real show business. Sport, which is no longer a leisure time activity in which free time is spent or the body is disciplined, has become an economy rapidly and naturally increased its revenue. In fact, today the annual income created by sport economy in the whole world can rise up to 500 billion dollars when external effects are also taken into consideration. Almost two thirds of this income come from football. In this context, we can easily say that sport organizations have become eco-sport organizations today. Football is the largest source of betting economy. Football, which is the most common and most followed sport branch in the whole world, is the most popular sport branch in the remaining five main lands other than North America and Australia. The money invested in betting and games of chance is 227 billion dollars. While 226 billion and 726 million betting and games of chance are played annually, the money invested in Turkey on games of chance reaches 2,5 billion dollars a year. Only 1,6 of this money comes from İddia. According to the research that we conducted, today there are 75 thousand online betting games in the world. The amount of betting on virtual media is around 90 billion dollars (dünya.com, 2009).

Betting companies in France, which won the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, made a very good profit from this trophy. The betting turnover for the World Cup in France broke the record of all times with 690 billion euros. This number was recorded as 290 billion Euros in 2014 World Cup. The highest betting was recorded for France-Croatia final match with 67 million euros. French placed a bet of 35 million euros for France-Belgium semi-final and 23 million Euro for Uruguay-France quarter final (dw.com, 2018). The sports sector, which grows every year, is estimated to reach 600 billion dollars today. The favourite area of this sector is football and betting games. It is thought that football betting sector exceeds 100 billion dollars. Using the benefits of technology effectively, betting companies advertise and promote on every platform.

### **2.1 The development of betting in Turkey**

When we look at our country, it can be said that betting started with horse racing games. Regular horse racing with a modern sense began in 1856 in Turkey's history. Horse races, which were interrupted by war and various social crises, are known as the first non-official betting games of the public. Spor Toto is the first game betting that emerged officially in Turkey (Koçyiğit, 2018).

The first study on Turkey Spor Toto is accepted as the translation of Spor Toto legislation brought from Sweden by the General Director of Physical Training Vildan Savaşır in 1949. Based on the studies conducted by the attempt of Football Federation President Ulvi Yenil in 1959, "Joint Law on Betting in Football" was enacted on April 29, 1959. The first coupon was accepted on March 26, 1960. Reasons such as frequent cancellation of games from its establishment until 1965, distribution of a small share of the revenue as prize and low number of dealers caused the first years of the implementation to be stagnant. In the mid-1965, single evaluation system was introduced for the assessment of coupons. Last minute service was established for coupon acceptance. Gifts, which were not in contrast with the moral and traditions of sport started to be given to participants who were successful by the organization and distributors. The number of colons was increased. With these innovations, then called Spor Toto Organization Directorate became an organization that provided more intense service. Public revenues between 1970 and 1977 declined significantly. Following this, with the restructuring of Spor Toto Organization Directorate in 1978, the organization improved the financial resources of the country's sport and was brought to Turkey's agenda again. In this period in which sport investments increased and resources were transferred to new institutions with fair play prizes and competitions, transition to technology and Spor Loto came up. Spor Loto was approved in 1985 and the organization that was authorized put Spor Loto game into the service of participants in May 1986. The game which was shortly adopted by the participants left Spor Toto game behind in terms of public resource production. Following this, Totogol game came into the play in the 1994-1995 season ([sportoto.gov.tr](http://sportoto.gov.tr)).

## 2.2. Betting Economy in Turkey

Spor Toto Organization Directorate, which gained sales revenue of 17 million dollars in 2003, increased this amount to 10 billion TL (about 2 billion dollars) thanks to İddaa. İddaa game, which had a turnover of 236 million TL in 2004, had a turnover of more than one billion TL in 2006, with 1.2 billion TL. Reaching 2.3 billion TL revenue in 2008; the 2017-18 turnover of İddaa passed 9 billion TL. Between 2004 and 2018, the cumulated turnover of İddaa reached 57 billion 985 million TL. According to State Audit Court reports, Spor Toto Organization Directorate had revenue of 9.043.898.884 TL from İddaa and other sport betting games (90% of this income was from İddaa) in 2017-18 season. With interest and other income, the revenue of 2017 was 9.132.316.554 TL ([ekonomidunya.com](http://ekonomidunya.com), 2018).

**Table 2:** Spor Toto organization directorate 2017 Income/Expense

Income and Expense Items	TL	Share (%)
<b>Income (TL)</b>	<b>9.132.316.554</b>	<b>100,00</b>
Domestic sales	9.043.898.884	99,032
Other incomes	10.207.395	0,112
Interest income	60.408.630	0,661
Unusual income	17.801.645	0,195
<b>Expense (TL)</b>	<b>9.132.406.552</b>	<b>100,98</b>
Prize distributed	5.335.900.341	59,00
Games of chance tax	452.194.944	5,00
Public share	333.622.964	3,69
Personnel expense	17.328.238	0,19
Goods and service purchase	36.446.703	0,40
Advertising and promotion	914.329.770	10,11
Prize payment Premium expenses	42.829.674	0,47
System Risk Management expense	126.614.584	1,40
Name right and TFF share	373.567.127	4,13
Dealer commission expenses	807.974.060	8,93
Sport General Directorate share	688.613.661	7,61
Severance pay	2.984.486	0,03

Source: [ekonomidunya.com](http://ekonomidunya.com), Access date: January 8, 2020.

### 2.3.1 Illegal Betting Economy in Turkey

A very comprehensive and appropriate definition of unregistered economy is all income generating activities carried without the knowledge and records of the state that cannot be included in the Gross National Product (GNP) since it has never been documented or since it has been documented with misleading documents with a partially true or not true at all content and since it cannot be estimated with known statistical methods (Altınışık, 2017). Although betting games organized by countries within specific laws and regulations are accepted as legal in those countries, illegal betting is considered as more attractive by people. Illegal virtual betting sites, which are very easy to access, cause a serious damage to the economy of countries since their income is not subject to tax.

According to Turkey Sport Betting Market/The effects of illegal betting' prepared by Deloitte Turkey, while the legal betting market played in our country is 8 billion TL, illegal market has exceeded 6 billion TL. Moreover, street betting markets are not included in illegal market figures. The cross between legal and illegal betting is getting smaller. The legislation in Turkey is bringing along a great tax loss in terms of the state. According to an example given in the report, a legally operating betting company in England which is illegal in Turkey made 135 million TL in 2013. While the company made 30% of its revenue from Turkey, only 4% came from England. Annual turnover of illegal betting gangs is increasing each year. Their annual turnover is estimated to exceed 20 billion TL in Turkey. While the state has a financial loss of 1 billion TL from the betting by networks under the counter and on the internet, clubs have a financial loss of more than 2 billion TL (Altınışık, 2017).

According to the report issued by Financial Crimes Investigation Board, it was found that 50 billion TL virtual betting is played in Turkey annually. In this report which

stated that this situation brings two times more income than legal betting since there is no tax deduction reported that illegal betting is preferred for this reason. The report also revealed the profiles of individuals who played illegal betting. The age range was found to be between 18 and 50. The report stated that the “servers” of betting sites were linked to England, France and Cyprus. It was emphasized that about 5 million people played illegal betting in Turkey since the rates are high in betting on the internet (haberturk.com, 2017).

### **2.3.2 Reasons for choosing illegal betting sites**

As with legal bets, there is no established order or structure or control in Turkey. Illegal betting sites are coordinated from countries such as Malta and Georgia. In any adverse situation that individuals may face, there is no one they can address their remarks too and in addition individuals do not have any legal basis in adverse situations. Although users know about this, they continue to play. Below, there are motivations to play illegal betting.

- The rates given in illegal betting sites are higher when compared with legal betting.
- Illegal betting sites have many different options and ways to play which do not exist in legal betting sites.
- While legal betting sites do not have a bulletin for every sport and every league, illegal betting has bulletins for almost all leagues and all branches.
- While the functioning of “live betting” concept is not very orderly in legal betting sites, illegal betting sites are almost based on “live betting”.
- Illegal betting sites do not have only sport betting, but they also have the games in modern casinos (such as roulette, poker, blackjack, etc.)

Although this information sounds very attractive to people, generally they cannot get the money they earn because they have no legal basis, they are left at the mercy of site administrators.

### **2.3 Birth of football betting in Turkey**

Sport-based betting games in Turkey have a history of fifty years. Spor Toto began to be played with Law number 7258 on Organization of Common Betting in Football Competitions adopted in 1959. Games like Spor Toto and Spor Loto changed in time and became more attractive for participants. With the desire to win, betting played on sport and the amount of money on betting reached very high numbers (Özsoy et al, 2014).

Public revenues between the years 1970 and 1977 declined seriously. Following this, with the new structuring in Spor Toto Organization Directorate in 1978, the institution improved the financial source of sport in the country with new projects and came to the fore again in Turkey. In this period when sport investments increased and resources were transferred to new institutions with fair play prizes and competitions, transition to technology and Spor Loto came up. Spor Loto was approved in 1985 and the organization that was authorized put Spor Loto game into the service of participants in May 1986. The game which was shortly adopted by the participants left Spor Toto game

behind in terms of public resource production. Following this, Totogol game came into the play in the 1994-1995 season (sportoto.gov.tr, 2017).

İddaa was put into practice fully in 2004. İddia was created in Turkey by entrepreneur Alphan Manas and Youth and Sport Ministry of the time. Besides İddia, Alphan Manas has important projects for our country such as OGS, Hugo and Deniz Taksi. The game was promoted by Spor Toto which had a turnover of 17 billion and which could not make a profit. Half of this turnover was distributed to public and it was not possible to pay the salaries of half of the workers. At this point, Alphan Manas and his team created İddaa. İddaa game was built on a fixed odds bet. The system was built on build-transfer-operate freed of Milli Piyango. Although it was thought of as a game that would not create turnover, İddia became a rapidly spreading game in Turkey one year after it started (Koçyiğit, 2018).

İnteltek won the bid for the main dealer by Spor Toto Organization Directorate which was organized to make İddia popular in the country and to increase the revenue of betting games. İnteltek became the main dealer of the game for technological follow-up and system development and risk management of İddaa. İnteltek created sub-dealers and developed the game and made it popular ([ekonomidunya.com](http://ekonomidunya.com), 2018).

In the bid, which was made in 2020 for the first time, the only offer was given by İnteltek. The second bid was made in 2003. As a result of the bid, İnteltek won with a share of 12%. Thus, the share of the company became 16,3%. The contract was terminated in 2007 with the provision given by the Council of state that there was no legal base. Spor Toto made a temporary contract of one year with İnteltek for the game not to stop. With a bid in 2008, İnteltek won the bid with a share of 1,4 for 10 years. In the bid in 2018, İnteltek was the only bidder with an undertaking of 200 billion TL revenue for 10 years and won the bidding. In the upcoming days, Spor Toto Organization Directorate made an announcement from its official website that the bidding was cancelled because there was no competition since İnteltek was the only bidder. In the announcement made on February 28, 2019 on the official website of Spor Toto Organization Directorate, it was stated that a 10-year long contract was signed between the Directorate and Şans Girişim Ortak Girişim.

#### **2.4 Contributions of iddaa to Turkish football**

While the turnover of İddia increased 38,3 times between 2004 and 2018 and reached 9 billion 44 million TL from 234 million TL, the amount distributed to clubs reached 374 million TL from 21 million TL by increasing 17,8 times.



**Graph 1:** İddaa turnover development between 2004 and 2017 and the amount distributed to clubs by years (Million TL)



Source: [ekonomidunya.com](http://ekonomidunya.com), access date: January 8, 2020.

During this process, while the cumulated turnover of İddaa reached 57 billion 985 million TL, the amount transferred to clubs was 3.3 billion TL. In other words, the amount transferred to clubs within the past 14 years was 5,76% of the total sales revenue. According to this data, while İddaa turnover was annually 4 billion 141 million TL on average, the annual average amount distributed to clubs in all leagues, primarily upper League clubs under “name right” was 238,9 Million TL. While the amount transferred to sport federations between 2004 and 2018 reached 1 billion 600 million TL, the amount transferred to amateur clubs within the last five years was 67 million TL. The amount transferred to many sport branches such as football, basketball, volleyball, handball, water polo, table tennis as “name right” during the first quarter of 2004-2017 years was close to 3 billion TL. In 2017-2018 season, 87.9 million TL was transferred to Super League clubs. In 2017-18 season, the amount transferred to Super League clubs through İddaa from Spor Toto Organization Directorate betting revenue was 87 million 889 thousand TL ([ekonomidunya.com](http://ekonomidunya.com), 2018).

Since 2011-2012 season, Spor Toto Organization Directorate provided 301 million 560 thousand TL support to 1st league clubs, 348 million 283 thousand TL support to 2nd league clubs, 287 million 37 thousand TL support to 3rd league clubs under “name right” payments. Only during 2017-2018 season, 158 million 526 thousand TL İddaa name right payment support was given to Spor Toto 1st league, TFF 2nd league and 3rd league teams ([sportoto.gov.tr](http://sportoto.gov.tr), 2018).

**Table 3:** İddia revenue amount transferred on  
2017-2018 Super League teams by Spor Toto Organization Directorate

No.	Team	Share (TL)
1	Beşiktaş	6.666.000
2	Başakşehir	6.150.000
3	Fenerbahçe	5.857.000
4	Galatasaray	5.559.000
5	Konyaspor	5.462.000
6	Akhisarspor	5.164.000
7	Kaserispor	5.000.000
8	Trabzonspor	4.801.000
9	Gençlerbirliği	4.592.000
10	1Bursaspor	4.577.000
11	Sivasspor	4.556.000
12	Yeni Malatyaspor	4.424.000
13	Antalyaspor	4.376.000
14	Osmanlıspor	4.376.000
15	Kasımpaşa	4.374.000
16	Alanyaspor	4.288.000
17	Göztepe	4.220.000
18	Karabükspor	4.143.000
	Total	88.585.000

Source: [ekonomidunya.com](http://ekonomidunya.com), access date: January 8, 2020.

**Table 4:** “Name Right” amount of the income transferred  
to 1st league teams by Spor Toto Organization Directorate in 2017 - 2018

No.	Team	Transferred amount
1	Adana Demir	2.230.000
2	Adanaspor	2.306.000
3	Altınordu	2.301.000
4	Balıkesirspor	2.230.000
5	Boluspor	2.731.000
6	BYŞ.BLD. Erzurum	2.542.000
7	Denizlispor	2.100.000
8	Elazığspor	2.183.000
9	Eskişehirspor	2.129.000
10	Gaziantepspor	1.758.000
11	Gazişehir G.Antep	2.460.000
12	Giresunspor	2.572.000
13	İstanbulspor	2.448.000
14	Manisaspor	2.082.000
15	Ankaragücü	2.277.000
16	Rizespor	2.413.000
17	Samsunspor	2.029.000
18	Ümraniyespor	2.301.000

Source: [sportoto.gov.tr](http://sportoto.gov.tr), access date: January 11, 2020.

### 3. Conclusion

Overall, in line with the above given statistics and comments, we can see how strong and robust structures betting has economically. Although not included in the present study, it is also known that betting also allows for match-fixing negotiations which lead to sabotaging sport organizations at some point. However, again in line with the statistics and comments above, the structure of betting intertwined with sport organizations allow these problems to decrease each year. Economic gain and reaching masses are factors that unite nations, betting companies, sport organizations and clubs at a common point. As long as all these elements provide their interests as much as they want, betting sector will grow with sport organizations and the greatest threat preventing this growth is illegal betting sector.

On July 2, 2018, important changes were made to the Law on regulation of betting and games of change in football and other sport competitions within the context of 29.04.1959 dated and 7258 numbered law which has been in force for years. With the decree law numbered 703 which came into force on the date of its publication in the Official Gazette, the scope of illegal betting penalty was expanded and the amount of penalties was increased ([ozkankilic.av.tr](http://ozkankilic.av.tr)).

29 June 2011 dated newspaper announcement of Spor Toto Organization Directorate and the statements of Bekir Yunus Uçar as the director showed that 93% of the games preferred in İddia coupons are from foreign leagues, while 7% are from Turkish leagues. This shows that the people of our country do not trust our teams. The institution which should provide trust should focus on providing trust in sport and spreading sport to society, by leaving aside political functions.

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