



## EUROPEAN BRIDGE LEAGUE

### President's Report Opatija – June 2014

Dear Presidents Emeritus, NBO Presidents, Delegates and Friends,

I am pleased to present my report of the 2012-2014 activities.

The results of our activities are listed below and divided into several categories:

#### **1) Institutional activities**

##### *a) Executive Committee meetings*

Since Dublin, there have been 6 Executive Committee meetings

- In Eilat (Israel) during the Champions' Cup in November 2012
- In Lausanne (Switzerland) in February 2013
- In Ostend (Belgium) during the European Open Championships in June 2013
- In Opatija (Croatia) during the Champions' Cup in November 2013
- In Lausanne (Switzerland) in March 2014
- In Opatija (Croatia) during the European Team Championships in June 2014

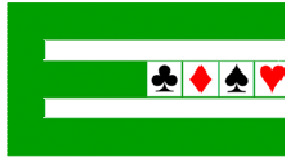
##### *b) Presidential Council*

Filippo Palma as usual hosted the Presidential Council in Tuscany in May 2013 and in May 2014.

##### *c) WBF meetings*

I attended the following meetings:

- WBF Executive Council (Delegate of Zone 1) meetings:
  - In Lille (France) during the World Bridge Games in August 2012
  - In Bali (Indonesia) during the World Bridge Championships in September 2013
- WBF Management Committee and WBF Officers' meetings:
  - In Lausanne (Switzerland) in November 2012
  - In Milano (Italy) in March 2013
  - In Beijing (China) in December 2013
  - In Dallas (USA) in March 2014
- WBF Youth Committee as member:



- In Taicang (China) in August 2012
- In Atlanta (USA) in August 2013
- As Chairman of the WBF Credentials Committee and following the introduction of the new WBF Eligibility Code there was a great deal of work, much of it urgent, to be undertaken before the Championships. The discussions and decisions have mainly been taken by email.
- WBF Medical and Prevention Committee
  - In Lausanne (Switzerland) in 2012 and in 2013.

d) FISU and EUSA

I attended:

- The FISU Championships held in Reims (France) in July 2012
- The EUSA meeting held in Denizli (Turkey) in April 2014 where I made a presentation about the EBL and relations between Bridge and the University National Sport Association.
- With Adam Roczek, EUSA President, I signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the EBL and EUSA to promote Bridge and contribute to the development of Bridge competitions for students and to strengthen cooperation and partnership between the two organisations.

e) NBOs' Seminar

This event took place from 30<sup>th</sup> January to 2<sup>nd</sup> February in Berlin (Germany).

It was organised by Josef Harsanyi, EC Member and Chairman of the Officers' Seminar Committee in cooperation with the German Bridge Federation and its President, Ulrich Wenning.

We welcomed 75 delegates from 34 countries representing 96% of the members of the EBL. With the Executive Committee Members and the EBL staff this meant a total of 90 individuals present at the Seminar.

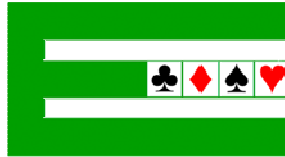
Gianarrigo Rona, WBF President, honoured us by attending for the last two days, attending the sessions and making a presentation about WBF, IMSA and SportAccord activities.

Stephan Maier, Member of the German Bundestag & Member of the Sports Committee attended one of the meetings and had dinner with all the delegates.

Thomas Bach, the new IOC President, living in Berlin, was in Sotchi for the Winter Games but sent us a kind message.

This Seminar was a real success in terms of participation, in the quality of the presentations and satisfaction from the participants.

The 6 half-day sessions permitted the attendees to alternate between plenary and group sessions thus promoting interactivity and discussion between the delegates.



Around 30 topics were discussed, some usual points as the championships, Finances and the recognition of Bridge as a sport but more important were the excellent presentations made by some countries concerning the development and promotion of bridge, Teaching activities, multimedia communications and also all that concerns Bridge for the Youth (competition, camp, recruitment, material, social media).

The EBL website has a video made during the seminar together with the links to some 30 presentations made during the Seminar (<http://eurobridge.org/7th-ebnbo-officers-seminar.aspx> )

f) TD's Courses

The EBL continued its action plan for the training programme put in place by Josef Harsanyi, Chairman of the Tournament Directors' Committee. After the Regional workshops organised in 2011 and in 2012, the main TD Course was organised in Bad Honnef in January 2013 with 48 TDs coming from 21 European countries and even from Egypt and South Africa. Ton Kooijman led the Seminar assisted for the lectures and tests by Maurizio Di Sacco, Max Bavin, Antonio Riccardi and Hans van Staveren. Peter Eidt and Slawek Latala were also present dealing with the organisation.

As was our objective with the creation of the Regional TD's Course in 2010, the standard was very high. There was a final examination which led to the following promotions:

- EBL Tournament Director: 6 TDs (Austria, Denmark x 2, Hungary, Netherlands, and Poland)
- NBO International Tournament Director: 6 TDs (England, Germany, Israel, Netherlands and Sweden x 2)

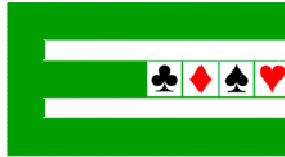
Some of the TDs promoted during this Seminar have participated in the Championships in Ostend 2013 or are here in Opatija 2014.

All the participants took and passed the examination even those who were already EBL TDs or NBO International TDs. This was firstly an opportunity for them to evaluate their level and secondly to give them a refresher course and additional training. The EBL will also use these courses to update the TD's official list. To be maintained on the EBL TD's active list, TD's will be required to participate in at least one of the last three TD courses organised by the EBL and reach a minimum level in the examination.

At the end of this TD Seminar, the EBL TD's Committee met to review the event. The overall organisation, the participation and the level of performance of the present TDs were considered to be satisfactory. It was agreed that the format of the final test must be reviewed for the next time and the costs for the participants were considered too high.

The next Main EBL TD course will be held in 2016.

In the meantime, two Regional TD courses will be organised. The EBL is in discussion with Greece and Spain as possible locations.



g) EBL Headquarters in Lausanne (Switzerland)

The EBL Headquarters in “La Maison du Sport International” in Lausanne must be used in order to satisfy the requirements imposed by the Swiss Authorities. In this context, the EBL organises at least one meeting in Lausanne each year. The EBL shares the costs of two salaries with the WBF, those of, Fotis Skoularikis for the IT section and Carol von Linstow for the Secretariat.

h) Visit to NBOs

During the past two years, I have visited around 25 countries across Europe.

The majority of these visits are linked to the organisation of the pending championships or to the possibility of organising events in the future.

I also participated in the Nordic Congress which was held in 2013 in Iceland where I met the Presidents or Vice-Presidents of the six Nordic countries: Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. As usual, I was invited to participate in a meeting during which matters relating to the EBL were raised directly.

I was also invited by the Presidents of some NBOs to various important tournaments such as the Cavendish in Monaco, the Angelini Trophy in the Olympic stadium in Rome, and events in Budapest and Zagreb.

Some Federations, notably the Netherlands and Great-Britain, invited me to discuss the future of the EBL concerning their finances and the relationship between the NBO and the EBL.

Finally, I was also invited to some Youth events and in particular to those which had received some help from the EBL Youth Fund.

I was not able to participate in all these competitions but, as an example, I travelled to Ponta Delgada (Azores) in October 2012 where Gualter Danaso organises a large Festival in which many youth teams (under 30) are invited from Europe, USA and Brazil.

Everywhere, I have always been warmly welcome by the NBO's President, Board Members and organisers.

In addition on the WBF level, I was kindly invited by Gianarrigo Rona, WBF President, to attend the two last editions of the SportAccord World Mind Games held in December in Beijing. This provided me with the opportunity to visit schools and universities with thousands of youth playing bridge on a high level.

We also visited the headquarters of OurGames, a company presenting its candidature to broadcast future WBF events on internet and maybe EBL championships.

It was very impressive to see more than 500 people working on the development of many online games.



## 2) Championships

The EBL organises three championships per year:

- In June, the European Team Championships, in the even numbered years, and the European Open Championships in the odd numbered years,
- In July, the Youth Championships, Pairs in the even numbered years and Team in the odd numbered years,
- In November, the Champions' Cup involving 12 teams

### a) European Team Championships

- The evolution of these during the last few years has reduced the number of playing days. It was 14 days until 2008; we changed to 11 days in 2010 and 2012 and this year in Opatija we reduced it to 10 days.

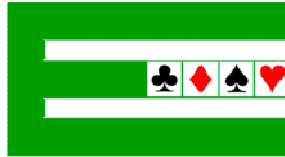
Following the discussions during the Seminar in Berlin a large majority wishes to keep the present Open format and not to create two divisions. As for the Seniors, I promised that the Seniors Series would not exceed one week which was the case both in Dublin and here in Opatija. For the Women's Series, the majority wished for a complete round robin, with each team meeting each other country. With 25 teams initially registered, it required a 9-day duration. For 2016, it is intended to organise the Women Series over 8 days.

The participation in the 52<sup>nd</sup> European Team Championships has achieved a good level with 85 teams (36 in the Open, 23 in the Women and 26 in the Seniors). This is less than in Ostend/2010 (89), ranking second ahead of Pau/2008 (83) and Salsomaggiore/2002 (80); with 13 or 14 more teams compared to Dublin/2012 (72), or Warsaw/2006 (71) and Malmo/2004 (71). The number of registrations has broken the Senior teams record (26) since the restriction to one team per country; but the participation for the three series fluctuates and is particularly linked to 2 factors:

- The location of the Championships that can be more or less attractive in terms of geographical location but essential in term of financial costs (travel and accommodation),
- The location of the World Championships in the same year. If it is located in Europe the participation is less than when the World Championships are located outside of Europe.

Even though the entry fees have not been increased for many years and despite some cheap accommodation solutions in Opatija, a number of countries did not come to Opatija in the end, even when the EBL proposed some help.

A few countries were unable to participate because of the Eligibility Code.



Liechtenstein is no longer a member of the EBL. Georgia and Montenegro are suspended. Albania, Belarus, San Marino and Ukraine have not participated for some years and Luxembourg after the criticism made in 2012 could not raise a team that complied with our Eligibility Code. Cyprus for the first time did not send a team and for the second consecutive time, the Czech. Rep. does not participate in the European Championships. Thank you to Faroe Islands for their comeback after a long absence.

- News in 2014

2 important changes in 2014

- the number of boards per match has been reduced from 20 to 16. This will please to the players, the journalists, the staff, the managers, the restaurants and last but not least the Seniors who wished to play the same number of boards as in the Open and Women.
- the Championships started on the Saturday evening with the Opening Ceremony and the first playing session was on the Sunday morning.

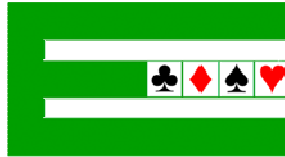
The EBL has been listening to the players and to the Federations

The non-professional Open players who have few chances to participate in the final round-robin need only apply for one week of vacation. This is the same for the Seniors who play over a seven-day period.

- As for Opatija 2014, I would like to particularly thank Jurica Carić, President of the Croatian Bridge Federation, and Goran and Branka Grguric, on-site organisers. The EBL had already worked with the Croatian Federation in particular with the organisation of the Youth Championships. They have accomplished a great job to make in Opatija one of the best EBL Championships. The President of the Republic of Croatia, Ivo Josipović honoured us with his presence during the Opening Ceremony.

- 2016 candidacies:

So far 3 or 4 countries have shown their interest but we received no official candidacy as of today. But one of them is on the way: Budapest/Hungary. On the invitation of the Hungarian Federation, I travelled to Budapest in August 2013 and again in April 2014. I twice met Pal Szekeres (former fencing Olympic champion now wheel chair bound), the Hungarian Secretary of Sport who showed a great interest in the organisation of a European Championship in Hungary. I visited several potential venues with Geza Homonnay, President of the Hungarian Bridge Federation. The budget is currently being prepared. Geza Homonnay made a positive presentation here in Opatija during the EBL EC meeting. I will again travel to Hungary in September and it should be possible to finalise the contract. The new EC which will be elected here today should be able to make a final selection during the next EC meeting in Milan in November.



b) European Open Championships

- These are Transnational Pairs and Team Championships (Mixed, Open, Women and Seniors).

These championships welcome not only European players but also players from the other 7 zones of the WBF who attended the last edition in Ostend in 2013. American and Chinese players have already been nominated as European Champions.

- The 6th European Open Bridge Championships were held in Ostend in June 2013. As in the past, the organisation was led by Marc De Pauw, President of the Royal Belgium Bridge Federation and by Bart Magerman, the on-site organiser. The participation was at the expected level but was far from the records set in Menton/2003 or San Remo/2009. 49 countries were present (37 European and 12 from other Zones).

As it is open to all players, the question of the programme is very important. Some changes occurred in Ostend but they did not prove workable and others are to be scheduled for the next edition in 2015.

The low level of participation in the Women and Seniors Series (most of the players prefer playing in Open) must be reviewed for 2015

- Championships in 2015

The EBL will go to Tromsø in Norway which will be the most northerly venue ever used for a European Championship, and will be held close to midsummer during the period of the Midnight Sun.

The organising committee led initially by Jan Aasen, President of the Norwegian Bridge Federation, and now by his successor, Jostein Sørvoll, with Knut Brinchmann, General Secretary, have made a professional approach to this event with collection of public and private funds, organisation of the Venue, flight tickets and accommodation at all prices. That will allow the organisation of these Championships under excellent conditions.

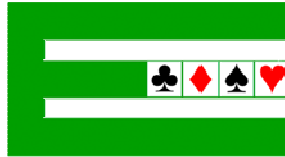
- Candidacies for 2017

I had discussions in Bali and then in Milan with Gianni Medugno, President of the FIGB, Filippo Palma, EC Member, and Francesco Conforti, General Secretary of the FIGB about the organisation of the 8<sup>th</sup> European Open Championships in Italy at a venue by the sea. I will travel back to Italy in September to visit several locations.

After Poznan/2011, Ostend/2013 and Tromsø/2015, a return to the Mediterranean coast would be attractive for the European players.

c) Champions' Cup

- The 11<sup>th</sup> Champions' Cup was held by the Red Sea in Eilat (Israel) in November 2012. This is the first time for years, that the EBL has organised an event in Israel. The players had a warm welcome. Eitan Levy, President of the Israeli Bridge Federation, Modi Kenigsberg, Chairman of the IBF and David Birman organised this Champions' Cup to a high standard.



- The 12<sup>th</sup> Champions' Cup took place in Opatija (Croatia) in November 2013. The majority of the top players thus discovered this city before returning for the Team Championships. The EBL was honoured with the presence of Ivo Josipović, President of the Republic of Croatia. Thank you to Jurica Carić, President of the Croatian Bridge Federation, and to Goran and Branka Grgurić, on site organisers, not only for the organisation of this event but also for the transfer of the players.
- The 13<sup>th</sup> Champions' Cup will be held in Milan (Italy) in the Headquarters of the FIGB. There is no doubt about the welcome from the President of the FIGB, Gianni Medugno, and the General Secretary, Francesco Conforti to this event for which the format will be slightly modified.
- The 14<sup>th</sup> Champions' Cup in 2015 will be held in England. Jeremy Dhondy, EBU Chairman, is working on this candidacy with his team and Heather Dhondy made a presentation to the EBL EC Members here in Opatija.

d) Small Feds Games

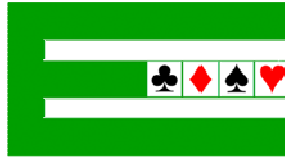
The EBL supports, since its beginning, this competition open to the Federations with less than 500 members. Thank you to Jean-Charles Allavena , Chairman of the Small Feds Committee, for the work he has accomplished since the first edition.

- The 5<sup>th</sup> edition in 2012 was held in Tallin (Estonia) and was organised by Sven Sester, President of the Estonian Bridge Federation, and Aarne Rummel, Chairman of the organising committee. For the first time, the organising country with its President won this event
- The 6<sup>th</sup> edition in 2013 took place in Kosice (Slovakia) and was very well organised by the President of the Slovakian Bridge Federation, Peter Belcak. This time the winner was the Czech. Republic.
- The 7<sup>th</sup> edition in 2014 will be held in Jurmala (Latvia) and the 8<sup>th</sup> Edition in 2015 will be in Cyprus. The Czech. Republic is a candidate for 2016 and Bosnia-Herzegovina for 2017.

With the exception of 2013 because of the WBF Championships, I have always participated in these Games. This is an excellent opportunity to meet the small Federations for which the sport and financial concerns are totally different from other EBL countries. At the end of the Small Feds meeting held two years ago, the EBL reduced the fees for the countries with less than 500 members. To have a championship starting on a Saturday with a first Round Robin in one week was also a request from the small Federations and this has been put into place in 2014.

One regret however: this event being very friendly should stimulate the small Federations to participate in the different EBL competitions. Unfortunately, this has not been the case and some countries participate in the Small Feds Games sometimes to the detriment of the Team Championships.





e) Simultaneous Pairs

The Simultaneous Pairs are held in November. Anna Gudge is in charge of its organisation. European Master Points are awarded. Please support this event by encouraging your clubs to participate

f) Youth Championships

These championships will be detailed in the “Youth” section.

### 3) Development

Even though the main objective of an International Sports Federation such as the EBL is to organise championships each year, the development policy is a major consideration for the future of our sport.

a) Teaching

For some years, the larger NBOs have developed a teaching policy. Indeed, it is not possible to consider having a unified European teaching system. During the last Teaching Seminar organised by Gianarrigo Rona, all these large countries proposed to assist some small Federations with their teaching policy but this didn't really prove viable.

The EBL will organise a new Teaching Seminar in 2015. This will be the opportunity to share experiences but the EBL will particularly take on the role of facilitator of the exchange of knowledge between the European NBOs.

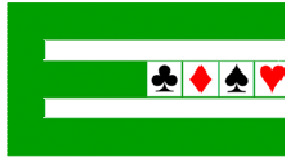
b) TD's

Around the world, the EBL is recognised as having the best TDs. Most of the time it is the European TDs who have organised the TD Courses in other WBF zones.

In 2010, the EBL decided that to run the TD's Courses in way that would profit the majority of the participants, the quality level of the TDs should be structured. This led to the TD's Course plan and to the creation of the Regional TD Courses. Several countries which could not participate in the past have thus been able to send their TDs with positive impacts on the quality of the other TDs in their country.

The Regional TD's Course policy will be maintained with one or 2 courses per year.

The Main TD Course will be held every three years (next one in 2016) and is open not only to the European candidates but also to all the zones of the WBF.



### c) Promotion

The promotion of our sport is work to be undertaken on a daily basis. During the Seminar in Berlin, several NBOs presented their own experience which could be shared by all.

To change our image, the Youth sector has been largely used during these last years. The Mind Sport Games and the image of our champions also enable us to promote our sport.

But there is a reality which we cannot escape from in particular in the West part of Europe, which is the growing age of the members of our NBOs.

Far from being a handicap, it also can be an opportunity. During the NBO's Seminar in Berlin, several presentations made by the NBOs showed some targeted experiences towards the active persons and Seniors.

The social aspect, the friendship, the maintenance of the intellectual functions, the prevention against Alzheimer disease offer the possibility for promotion of our sport amongst this age group.

We take care of our Juniors and of our competitions' players. In the future, the NBOs and the EBL must collaborate to conduct some new policies towards the active persons and the Seniors who constitute the major party of the members.

## 4) Communication

### a) EBL Website

- As scheduled, the new EBL Website together with the WBF Website, was put in place in 2013.

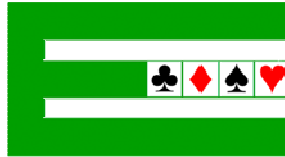
Some important technical changes have been applied even if it is transparent for the majority of us.

Some personnel changes were made as for the Website manager shared between the WBF and the EBL; he is working in our Headquarters in "La Maison du Sport International" in Lausanne.

- All these changes proved to be necessary but some additional work is still to be accomplished in particular to regularly add updated news on the Website. This is one of the priorities for the team which you are going to elect.

### b) Social Media

- Does The EBL have to regularly use the new Media as Facebook; Twitter, etc...?  
This is a sensitive question and the Executive Committee has differing opinions on this matter.
- I however asked to create an EBL Facebook page particularly dedicated to the Youth for the promotion of the Youth Championships and of the Youth Camp which will take place in Burghausen in July.



- As of today, 858 persons have "liked" the EBL Facebook page. The championships together with the camp show a great success in terms of participation. Correlation or not?
- Facebook will be also used as to give information during the entire championship as we are currently doing it here in Opatija.
- Afterwards, it will be the time to assess the situation.

c) Daily Bulletin

At the time of Internet, the EBL remains classic in continuing to publish the Daily Bulletin on paper. This is going to be changed and is part of the Environmental Development.

The number of issues printed in Opatija has been greatly reduced. Many of you in fact read the Daily Bulletin on tablets.

If this experience shows as positive, there will be few printed Daily Bulletins in our next championships.

However, you certainly noticed that we have on a daily basis published photos and videos on the Website and through Facebook.

The continuous improvement is also valid for the journalists.

Formerly, they were sitting in the playing area, then in the Vu-Graph and tomorrow on the computers screens.

So, after discussing with Mark Horton, we decided that half of the journalists would work from home. The assessment of this experience will be made at the end of the championship.

d) NBO's and EBL

The EBL communication can not only be through Website and at its championships.

Some new ideas have been raised by the NBOs in Berlin. For example Israel, France and the Netherlands have made some excellent presentations.

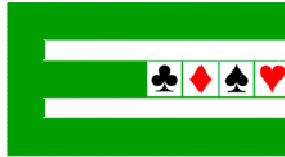
Each Federation cannot work in its own area. The experience of the first one can serve to some others and the EBL has to have more than ever a role of facilitator in these exchanges.

## 5) Youth Bridge

a) EBL championships

1) 2012 – Youth Pairs Vejle (Denmark)

Starting with these championships, the EBL initiated a new series for the Mixed Pairs which brought together 51 pairs from its first edition. A total of 171 pairs participated in this event which was organised with great professionalism by the Danish Federation, its President, Henrik Friis, Flemming Bøgh-Sørensen and Per Egelund.



2) Youth Team Wroclaw (Poland)

This was a return to Wroclaw for a new Youth championship after the one in 2008. 50 teams came from 25 countries and we had a record participation in the Youngsters series with 19 teams. The Polish Bridge Union led by Radek Kielbasinski, President, Slawek Latala and Stanislas Golebiowski have once again demonstrated their know-how during this championship.

3) 2014 – Youth Pairs Burghausen (Germany)

This year, we can notice a large participation with the registration of 65 pairs in Junior, 66 pairs in Youngsters, 25 pairs in Girls, and 43 for the Mixed Pairs coming from 25 countries.

The record participation in a European Pairs championship has been beaten in Youngsters and even if we don't take into account the Mixed which was created in 2012, the total record of participation should be beaten since the championships are only on a European basis and no longer open to the other Zones.

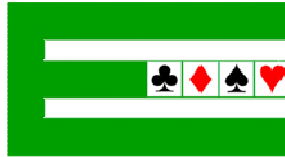
A great thank to the German Federation, its President, Ulrich Wenning, its Vice-President Josef Harsanyi (who lives in Burghausen), Rosemarie Kuntz and Kareen Schroeder.

One remark to be raised for all these events in terms of participation: the number of Youngsters is continually increasing at each championship. The Girls Series shows some difficulties to find its place probably because of a lack of promotion from the EBL and the NBOs.

b) Youth University Championships

1) 2012 – FISU – World Bridge Championships – Reims (France)

It proved to be a disappointment in term of participation with only 17 teams coming from 13 countries despite all the efforts deployed by Patrick Grenthe, FFB President, and Patrick Bogacki, FFB Vice-President and on-site organiser, and the entire team. No participation to notice from the American teams which preferred to play in the National in Philadelphia. However, the competition, the social programme with the visit to the cellars of champagne was much appreciated.



2) 2013 – EUSA – European University Bridge Championships - Kraljevica (Croatia)

12 Universities from 8 countries participated in this event. The technical organisation showed no problem. As in all the University Championships, the WBF and the EBL were represented by Harry van de Peppel and by the Bridge Technical delegate from FISU and EUSA, Geert Magerman. Thanks to them for the time they have dedicated to University bridge for several years.

3) Remark

The participation in the EUSA or FISU events has largely decreased during recent years compared to the first editions. The root cause is most probably the multiplication of bridge events for the Youth during these past ten years at the WBF level, the EBL level and the NBOs.

This is a great chance for the young players who have the opportunity to participate in numerous competitions. But the University championships are very important in the Youth policy of the WBF and of the EBL.

On the World and European University level, bridge is clearly recognized as a full sport; however, in many countries in Europe, this recognition has not yet been achieved. This is certainly a springboard in the promotion of our sport. Our current goal is for the WBF to participate in the Universiades and for the EBL to the EUSA Games. We have the chance to be able to participate, as a demonstrative sport, in the EUSA Games in Rotterdam this summer. We will do our best to be present in 2016 in Rijeka (Croatia) and in 2018 in Coimbra (Portugal).

This is also in the way to take Bridge as a sport for the students that I signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the EUSA President, Adam Roczek, last April.

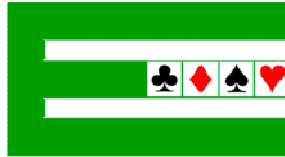
c) EBL camps

Since 2006 the EBL not organised any Youth camps but during each championships, the players were asking for a Youth camp.

On the other hand many Federations were reluctant because it could weigh down their budget.

I engaged that the Youth events organised by the EBL would not exceed 8 days. The duration of the Team championships has been reduced to 7 days for Tromsø in 2015 and this year the EBL proposed a camp with a 3-day duration immediately after the 5 days of the European Pairs Championships in Burghausen.

As of today, we have 105 registered participants coming from 25 countries.



The “large” countries that have qualified for the WBF World Championships in Turkey in August are not participating. But for some others, as Ireland for example which has registered 36 players, this is real engagement.

Furthermore, the German Federation organises, after the EBL one, another 3-day camp for those who are interested and they seem to be numerous.

The programme has been prepared by Dimitri Ballas, Micke Melander, Josef Harsanyi and Kareen Schroeder. It will alternate between a lot of bridge and some cultural and sporting activities.

In the event that this is a success, this EBL camp, limited to players from Europe, will be organised every two years but it should not be considered as a competitor to the camps organised by other NBOs or groups of NBOs such as the Nordic camp held during the Easter period; the EBL will continue to give its financial support for these events.

d) NBO's Youth events

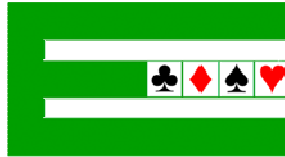
Many countries now regularly organise Youth events. If these are on an international level and the organising NBO has a reduced budget, a request can be sent to the EBL for a subsidy from the Youth Fund. 3 countries in 2013 and 2 in 2014 have sent this kind of request to the EBL.

e) Youth Fund

This fund was started in 2009 and is added to every year with a sum of 50 000 € which curiously the EBL has some difficulties to spend.

Since its beginning, this fund permitted to help some teams to participate in the EBL championships, and to assist some countries in the organisation of some Junior events, tournaments or camps. This fund also contributed to the translation into English of some promotional material provided by the Swedish Federation and this is available for all countries on the EBL Website.

The Youth Committee which met in Albena in 2011 and in Wroclaw in 2013 together with the EBL EC expect this Youth fund to serve for some emergent projects, for development and promotion for Youth. Many ideas have been raised but without any real consensus and most of the time without any concrete proposals. The EBL EC wishes to remedy this very soon.



## **6) Realizations and projects**

During the last two years many projects have come to fruition while others are still in a project phase.

### **a) Competition**

#### **1) Realized**

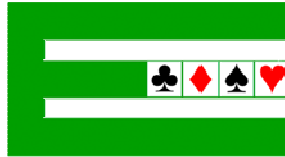
- New formats with reduction of duration  
Open Team reduced to 10 days of play  
Youth Team reduced to 7 days of play
- New Eligibility Code  
applied in January 2013
- New VP scale in competition
- Cost reduction (Ceremony, staff, functioning expenses)
- Procedure of review replacing the Appeals Committee
- Personal score card results printed for all players

#### **2) Undertaken**

- New anti-doping code
- New format for European Open Championships

#### **3) Projects in development**

- Broadcasting of the championships  
We are at the dawn of a new era. Until now, the EBL has not received any income from the broadcasting of the matches of its championships - on the contrary it generates costs for material and staff.  
The WBF is presently negotiating with OurGames and during my last trip to Beijing they also presented me some proposals for the EBL championships.  
If in any case in the future the EBL could sign a contract with any company, the income will contribute as a priority to reduce the entry fees of the championships.
- Technology  
Tables with camera and automatic systems for duplication  
The EBL has always been at the forefront of the technology and we have to stay at that level. Many reductions of costs have been made for the championships but never against the technological improvements or the comfort of the players.
- Online tournaments and championships on Internet



b) Youth

1) Realized

- Mixed Pairs in Youth championships
- EBL camp
- Internet championships for students
- Promotional material
- Help in the organisation of international Youth events by NBOs
- Memorandum of Understanding signed with EUSA

2) Undertaken

- Development of Social Media
- Coordination of the calendar with WBF and EUSA/FISU
- Online tournament on Internet

c) NBO's

1) Realized

- Stabilisation of the calendar for the EBL competitions
- Reduction of the Dues for the Small Federations
- Increased participation in the NBO Officers' Seminar
- Reduction of the duration of the Team championships in Open Team and Junior Team and thus the costs for the Federations.
- no increase of the entry fees for the EBL championships for the past 8 years

2) Undertaken

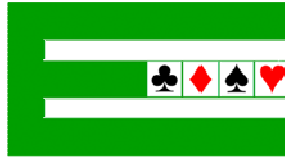
- Role of facilitator for the exchange and sharing of experiences between the NBOs.
- Project of a new membership dues formula

d) Development and communication

1) Realized

- EBL Website
- EBL Facebook page
- EBL Video Daily Bulletin
- TD's Course annual plan





## 2)Undertaken

- Teaching Seminar in 2015

## 3)Projects in development

- Senior project development
- The EBL Statutes need reviewing

## e) Other Organisation relationships

### 1)WBF

EBL EC Members have many senior positions in the WBF and the relationships with Gianarrigo Rona, WBF President, can be qualified as excellent. The WBF and the EBL have a common view for the future of bridge and common projects. The next two WBF championships will be held in Europe: 2016 in Poland and 2017 in France.

### 2)IMSA/SportAccord

Marc De Pauw is now the Treasurer of IMSA. Bad news or good news, as you already know the World Mind Sport Games will not be organised in 2016 and bridge will organise its own championships.

The SportAccord World Mind Sport Games will once again take place in December in Beijing and the EBL winners of the Open & Women teams will qualify for this event.

### 3)FISU/EUSA

We have good relationships with these organisations and some new common projects are going to be put in place to develop bridge in the students.

We have also an international objective: participation as a sport to the Universiades and EUSA Games.

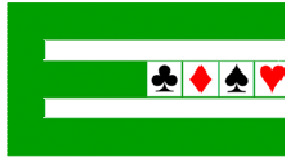
### 4)IOC/EOC

The EBL received the support of Thomas Bach, new IOC President for the organisation of the Seminar in Berlin and for the championships this summer.

The President of the Croatian Olympic Committee, Zlatko Matesa attended the Opening Ceremony here in Opatija.

For the organisation of the EBL championships, there are always some relations between the EBL and the National Olympic Committees.

Unfortunately, only 50% of the countries affiliated to the EBL are members of their National Olympic Committees and this has not improved for 4 years.



### 5) EU Community projects

- During the Seminar in Berlin, the President of the FIGB, Gianni Medugno and some Representatives of CONI (Italian Olympic Committee) presented to the participants a project called "Cerebrum Sanum in Corpore Sano" which is a not-for-profit sport event supported by the constitution of an European Committee to promote bridge and fencing and their values with the patronage of EU and IOC.
  - Marek Malysa (from Poland) has presented a project involving several countries on the medical and social advantages inherent in the practise of bridge playing by Seniors. This project could later be extended to all the other Federations of the EBL.
  - Poland together with the Netherlands, Germany, United Kingdom and Czech Republic initiated a project within EUSA called "Bridge is more than you think" . The professional support of the application to the EU is managed by Stanislaw Golebiowski, and professionals from the city of Wroclaw.
    - Main topics:
      - 1) Model of promotion of bridge in groups of: high school youth, university students, people aged 50+ and people with disabilities
      - 2) Canon of fair play in bridge - scientific research into the questions surrounding fair play, the proper behaviour of players and tournament directors.
- A sum of 500.000 € is planned to be used for this international project. Please help the work of the of the Bridge-Erasmus group by active cooperation.  
Marek Malysa can answer your questions in Opatija.
- The EBL also intends to undertake a project to present a file on the Junior Bridge development which would fulfil the conditions of the EU.

### 6) Politics

For many years, the EBL has had no private sponsor and the major part of any sponsorship obtain comes from public subsidies.

In this context, it is important to have good relationships with the local, regional and national authorities. Here in Opatija in Croatia this is particularly the case with strong relationships maintained for four years with the Mayor, Ivo Dujmić and since the allocation of championships to Croatia with the County, the Government and even the President of the Republic of Croatia.

At this level, it is up to the President of the EBL himself who has to work in close cooperation with the host NBO. For 2016 in Hungary, I have already met the Minister of Sport twice and the next meeting is scheduled with the President of the Republic who is a bridge player and supports this project.



This is also the case in Norway for Tromsø in 2015. These strong relationships with the local authorities permit us to obtain some budgets which can be important, to find some public “Venues” and to facilitate all the local steps.

## **7) Memberships**

The EBL has 47 affiliated NBOs, including Georgia and Montenegro who are currently suspended. These two countries will again have the possibility to join the EBL and the WBF as soon as they fulfil their obligation to pay their membership dues. In the meantime, the EBL maintains contact with these two Federations to do its best to help them.

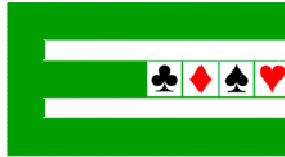
- Since Dublin in 2012, two countries have definitively been struck off: Armenia and Liechtenstein.
- The affiliated NBOs have a declared membership of a level just under 400 000 members but you all know that some federations are selective in their methods of counting.
- France remains the leading Federation with 98 717 members followed by the Netherlands at 83 985
- The number of members per country is stable but everywhere we are concerned about the increasing age of the members.
- The EBL reduced the cost of membership dues to its small Federations (those under a membership limited to 500) by copping the annual fee at 500€ (previously 820€)
- For two years, the EBL has been studying several projects to modify the cost of the membership dues
- These projects started by seeking to maintain a constant income with a decrease in dues for some countries and an increase for the other countries but this would have probably had very few chances to be approved during the General Assembly.
- In the coming years, if the EBL succeeds in finding new sources of income (Broadcasting for example), a different system for the membership dues could be applied with which all the countries would be winning.

## **8) Financial situation**

The EBL Treasurer, David Harris, will present you the detailed situation after my report.

In Summary

The EBL had slightly positive financial results in 2012 and 2013. This has occurred in spite of difficulties in finding a country to host the Championships and pay the usual financial contribution.



#### Income

- The dues have been slightly increased for most but they have been maintained to 500€ for the Federations with less than 500 members.
- The entry fees for the championships have not been increased; some have even been reduced and some countries received financial support from the EBL to participate

#### Expenses

- The establishment of a working office in Lausanne has increased the EBL operating costs.
- The new Website, its maintenance and new projects will go on generating new costs.

The slightly positive financial results would not be positive without a reduction of the EBL expenses:

- Since 2010, I have reduced to a minimum the members of the staff in the Championships. The salaries and the Per Diem have not been increased.
- The cost of the ceremonies have been greatly reduced
- To participate in the cost reduction the EBL Committees meetings now take place mainly during the championships or are organised by electronic exchanges.
- The Youth Championships that always run at a deficit are now moving towards breaking even

But the EBL had some costs that I don't want to reduce:

- I will never reduce the technical aspects of the championships with the services offered to the players. The EBL will continue to offer the best of technology, comfort and enjoyment at the championships.
- The costs of the NBO's Officers Seminar every two years, the Teaching Seminar and the TD Courses are shared between the NBOs and the EBL. These are vital ways to encourage relationships and exchanges of views in an informal manner that cannot take place during the formal proceedings of the General Assemblies.

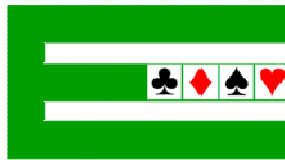
### **9) Elections**

Each NBO received the material for the elections (Voting number per country, the list of candidates with their CV)

Within the deadline we have received:

- 2 candidacies for the Presidency of the EBL
- 16 candidacies for the EC Members (12 positions)

So the delegates will have some choices and the democratic process of the EBL will permit the election of a new Executive Committee for a 4 year term.



## **10) Conclusion**

- Since my election in June 2010 in Ostend, I had the task and the opportunity to work with a professional and enthusiastic team.
- Despite all the difficulties, all the championships have been organised in a satisfactory manner and now some countries are applying to organise EBL championships. The objective in term of participation has been achieved for the Team and Open championships and the participation in the Youth championships shows a regular increase.
- The membership situation is stable without any important variation in all countries but everywhere showing an increase in the average age.
- The financial situation is satisfactory despite the lack of sponsors or other new income streams. A strict control of expenses permitted us to achieve this result.

I would like to end this report with my personal thanks to my predecessors the Presidents José Damiani and Gianarrigo Rona who honour me with their presence at this General Assembly. Thank you for your invaluable advice and encouragement.

Thank you to all my colleagues on the EBL Executive Committee for their investment and their enthusiasm. The success of the EBL during these last four years is also theirs.

Thank you to all the NBO Presidents and Officers with whom I have been having many fruitful contacts. They suggested many ideas and they have always warmly welcomed me in their country.

Thank you to all the players who encouraged me and who suggested some improvements in the organisation of the championships.

Thank you to all the Youth Bridge players, our future, incredible in their enthusiasm and energy, passion and attentive towards the future of bridge and always proud of the presence of their President during the EBL championships. Which makes for a rejuvenating experience every time!

I would not forget Maurizio Di Sacco, Fotis Skoularikis and Catherine Vitry with whom I am daily working, Anna Gudge for the Website and the Medical Committee and Carol von Linstow in the Headquarters in Lausanne. Thank you for your dedication and professionalism.

Bridge is not only a sport but also a passion and a big family.

We are all here to serve bridge and the EBL will always be present beside you to organise championships, for promotion and development, for the communication and at the disposal of all the players.

Thank you for your attention.