

ROLE and NEEDS of the SMALL NBOS of the EBL

An update

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Contact

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WHERE DO WE COME FROM?

- Two years ago, here in Roma during the IVth Seminar, we had for the first time included this item concerning the “Small Feds” in the agenda.
- It was following some discussions with President Rona, who had become conscious that Small Feds were more or less half of the members of EBL, that they had many specific problems which has not really been seen and treated by EBL and, last important thing, that these Small Feds were the real areas of growth for EBL, but that they needed help for their development.

WHO ARE THE « SMALL COUNTRIES » ?

- We decided that the most accurate definition was to consider that a Small Federation had less than 500 members.
- As the process was at its beginning, it was decided not to be too strict, which means that some slightly bigger NBOs (Lebanon, Czech Rep) or probably bigger (Bulgaria) could be included if they felt concerned.
- This definition creates clearly two groups of Small Feds :
 - The Small Feds in small countries, which will probably always remain small
Andorra, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, Luxemburg, Malta, Monaco, San Marino,
 - The Young Feds in big countries, which will leave this group within some years
Albania, countries from ex-Yugoslavia or ex-Soviet Union...
- This creates a group of 20 – 22 countries which, I hope, will be reduced regularly, this showing that our job and our help will have been successful.

WHAT DID WE DO ?

- After Roma 2007 came Antalya 2007. Two of us (K. Kapo from Albania and I) tried unsuccessfully to be elected to the Board of EBL. It was probably too early....
- President Rona decided to create a "Small Feds Committee" inside EBL, with two chairmen : Pim Vaders (The Netherlands), member of the Board and I. And some members : Mario Dix (Malta), Jerry Stamatov (Bulg), Konstandin Kapo (Alb).
- We organized in Monaco, Nov 2007, the 1st Small Feds Games, with the EBL support:
 - Not "one more competition", but 3 days of good and friendly bridge,
 - 16 teams from 14 countries,
 - Bulgaria won this first edition.. Logical...
 - José Damiani (WBF) and Pim Vaders (EBL) were with us for the Prize Giving Ceremony

WHAT DID WE DO (2) ?

- After the decision, more or less acted in Roma 2007, that we strongly supported, the change the formula of the European Open Championships, quite all the Small Feds took part to Pau 2008. The feedback was very good, and the results too : Bulgaria and Estonia qualified for the second week, Monaco was not far... Good and successful decision.
- Strong presence in Beijing too.
- This shows that, despite small financial capacities, despite non professional players, the enthusiasm of small countries for bridge is real, and that they want to be present.

WHAT DIDN'T WE DO ?

- One important thing mainly, which should be the base of the definition of the action of the SFC : we've prepared an inquiry, in order to know, on many items, how small feds were organized, how they worked, where are the problems, what they expected from EBL....
- And (my fault) this inquiry has not been sent until now. It's ready, it will be done very soon after this Seminar, but we lost some time.
- This shows that this original SFC Board should now be a little bit enlarged, and welcome some new members ready to work.

WHAT IS DECIDED TO DO ?

- As said just before, send the inquiry, treat it, analyse results, propose actions. I heard that EBL could provide some funds to Committees, it may help.
- But if some actions may be coming from EBL directly (seminars, training, workshops), some other should come from direct partnership between big and small feds (we've in Monaco close relations with French Fed, I know that Poland, Netherlands, Sweden, others certainly have done things, it should be interesting to give some concrete examples of help and cooperation).

WHAT IS DECIDED TO DO (2) ?

- We've spoken from the 1st Small Feds Games in Monaco.
- Maybe may my friend Erikas Vainikonis come and tell you some words, and confirm that the Lithuanian Fed wishes to organize the 2nd edition, this year in Vilnius.

WHICH KIND OF PROBLEMS? JUST REMIND A FIRST LIST....

- Administration : of the Federation, of the Clubs, of the Tournaments
- Training : for Teachers, for Directors
- Promotion & Marketing, Recruitment
- Junior Bridge & School Bridge
- Bridge Competitions
- Budget

WHICH KIND OF PROBLEMS ? SOME DETAILS (1)

■ ADMINISTRATION

- Many big countries have developed all kinds of software, to treat the different levels : Federation, Clubs, Members, and what is concerning the Competitions and Tournaments,
- We have access to many parts of the French structure.
- But what about you? And how would we work without it?

■ TRAINING

- Here too, either for Teachers or for Directors, we have access to the French structure..
- But what about you?

■ JUNIOR & SCHOOL BRIDGE

- We try to work on this aspect, so important for the development, but with many limits.
- But what about you?

WHICH KIND OF PROBLEMS ? SOME DETAILS (2)

■ PROMOTION - MARKETING

- Many efforts are done by our big neighbours, in order to recruit new Members, to develop the bridge,
- We look at this, try to catch ideas.
- We probably need a more structured help.

■ BRIDGE CHAMPIONSHIPS

- The basic point is that we don't have professional players,
- Which means that take part to European Championships is a pleasure,
- And time is taken on professional activity, on holidays or on family.
- Consequence is that we're frequently absent.

■ BUDGET

- Question is simple : how to do so many things, when your budget is coming only from 150 Members of the Federation, with very low levels of public subsidies.

WHICH KIND OF SOLUTIONS ? (1)

- Concerning the two first points, Administration & Training, two directions may be discussed :
 - A partnership with a big neighbour, like France & Monaco,
 - The creation of dedicated tools through an EBL program : software for administration or for tournaments, architecture of Web sites,

- Concerning the two next points, Promotion – Marketing & Junior – School Bridge :
 - Discussions during such Seminars , in order to understand what has been done, tested, successfully or not, seems the first logical step,
 - Before checking how it can be replicated in each country, with the adaptation to the local situation.

WHICH KIND OF SOLUTIONS ? (2)

- Concerning the Competitions of Bridge :
 - I think that EBL must work on the target that each country is taking part to the European Championships, which is difficult for non – professional countries.
 - Of course we want to keep the possibility to play regularly against big countries,
 - But two weeks of competition were a problem.
 - The proposal of the Polish Federation, with two groups and one week of round robin and then qualifying matches, as in Pau, seems perfect for everybody.

WHICH KIND OF SOLUTIONS ? (3)

- And about Budget.....
- Concerning the « daily » problems of the Small Countries, we should think of a Global Fund of Development, managed by EBL, which could bring to Small Countries help in their development and structuration.
- Concerning the problems connected to the participation to the Championships, I really believe that the goal of EBL should be that all its Members take part to the European Championships (if possible in the three categories). This is today difficult for many Small Countries. Here again, the research of a Budget by EBL should be the solution.

HOW TO REACH THESE GOALS ?

- The first step, after the presentation of Roma 2007, was to open a discussion and structures. President Rona made this possible through the SFC.
- Now this Group must work, better than during the two first years, and welcome some new members, mainly from Eastern Europe : you're the most concerned, please take part.
- And the last step, or maybe the first one, is that the Board of EBL welcomes, as soon as possible, one or two representants of Small Countries, which would show the will to be one big family and to treat together the different kind of questions.

REPRESENTATION AND DEMOCRACY INSIDE EBL

- I'd like to close this presentation with some words concerning this point.
- First to say that there is no conflictual approach from me about this, and when I highlighted my difficulties to find time for the SFC, I must say that I'm impressed by the quality of the job made by the EBL Board (the presentation of Marc on finances this afternoon, and the daily job he does, deserve from my point of view rewards and applauses from the Assembly).
- But I also think that times have changed, and bridge is no more limited to six or eight western european big countries. EBL has now 48 to 50 members, and even if 10 of them weight 85%, the others must have a role.

REPRESENTATION AND DEMOCRACY INSIDE EBL (2)

- I understand the issue that the bigger NBO's, the NBO's who finance EBL, may have a stronger role and presence.
- But the absence of all small feds is no more normal : look at the European Football League, Malta and Cyprus are members of the Board. They are not the biggest, nor the best!!!
- I don't feel that the item is urgent, we may take time to look at it and find ideas. Let's look at the organization of the other Feds, and let's try to build something, where all the families may be present.

CONCLUSIONS

- As expressed in my introduction, this is only an update, which tried to express different problems.
- I think that most of them may be efficiently treated, within quite short term
- I hope that some of us will complete this first contribution.
- THANK YOU !