

Report on the two Officials Sessions at the 2017 FEI Sports Forum Lausanne, Switzerland

It should be noted that all slides on each presentation over the two day Forum can be found on the FEI website and recently in the FEI Update. In case you did not have an opportunity to watch the Forum as it was Live Streamed, it is still available to be watched through a link on the FEI website.

Accompanying this report are five documents:

1. The slides of the FEI Officials Working Group (Officials Task Force)
2. The proposed Code of Conduct that is being recommended be for & signed by every FEI Official.
3. The slides of the Dressage Working Group
4. A list of all the panelists and Moderators at this year's Sports Forum.
5. Copy of the April 12 FEI Update. A link to the Sports Forum information is in the update.

Session 1 – Tuesday April 11, 2017

The first session was from the FEI Officials Task Force; now known as the FEI Officials Working Group. Their mandate was to review all FEI discipline Officials programs. In the eight months that they have been in place, an exemplary list of findings and recommendations were presented. The session was well organized with skill and clarity, which was greatly appreciated by those attending, Moderated by Canada's Mark Samuel who is also the Chair of the Officials Working Group and Leader of Group IV.

A list of thirteen Recommendations was given:

- 1. Code of Conduct** see attached. (This document also covers Conflict of Interest and will be generic and signed by all FEI Officials)
- 2. Job Descriptions** (all Official positions must have a Job Description. This can also be used in the competency evaluation.) Currently the group has the Jumper job Descriptions completed & all can use them as template for their own discipline. The Group has sent to other disciplines for development.
- 3. Develop a competency based evaluation system to replace the current FEI mandatory retirement age rule.** The evaluation system will be piloted in 2018, with the intent to finalize and submit a motion to remove the age limit rule at the 2018 FEI meeting for implementation in 2019. The question of retroactive reinstatement was asked. It is felt that any NF that feels they have an Official that should be reinstated (there will be a limit on how far back) they can apply to FEI and said individual will go through an evaluation process etc. if successful they will be reinstated. The Group and FEI recognise that age competency has changed considerably over the years and many countries in the world now have laws against age discrimination as it is also against Human Rights. Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA are just a few. It is only a matter of time when all countries will have to address this matter.
- 4. An Education calendar be established one year in advance.** A real need to do this to allow Officials to plan their year better

5. Improve the quality of education material and course delivery. The FEI needs to build a larger bank of Course materials that can be used by the FEI Course Directors. Currently some Course Directors are reluctant to give their material to the FEI. It is recognised that many have spent a long time and money building their materials and should rightfully be reimbursed for this.

6. Establish Course Director education program and funding. (Currently no licensing program, disciplines just decide who will be a CD. In future they will complete a course and be evaluated and licensed. A fund will be set up to help support this.)

7. All Disciplines to make extensive use of the e-learning platform. - FEI Campus. (The FEI Campus will be launched on the FEI site June 1, 2017) E-Learning will be a focus for Education of FEI Officials. This will not replace the practical application of skills, but will enhance it considerably.

8. Compulsory NF recommendation only upon entering the first level. This refers to national officials applying for the first level as an FEI Official. After they become licensed by FEI, the NFs will not be asked to recommend. However they (NF) may object with good reason and tangible proof.

9. Establish common fund to support Officials in getting more officiating experience. This is an expansion on the Eventing Global Program, which comes to an end this year. The fund will be made generic across the disciplines in future, to assist Officials opportunities, see # 12.

10. Rotation of Officials. In some areas there is too many of the same Officials officiating at the same competitions, thus limiting opportunities for younger/newer officials.

11. Create a Development Pool. This Pool will consist of the new upcoming Officials and Organizers will select at least one Official for their jury etc. per year. The Group also recommended one Official (Judge and Steward) be changed annually at all FEI Events. The Group recommended that an official may be at the same competition for a maximum of five consecutive years at which point they may not officiate that competition. It was not stated how long an Official must stay off a competition.

12. Extend number of Officials appointed to all Events. This refers to ensuring all FEI Officials get officiating opportunities, not to increased numbers of FEI Officials at each FEI Event. See #10 and #11.

13. Create a top layer of Officials for the professional sport. Establish a group of Officials that will officiate at the very top competitions of the sport eg: Games and Championships and competitions with high prize money etc. These Officials will be under scrutiny and undergo evaluations to ensure they are at the "top of their game". If they are unsuccessful they will be removed from the list, but not from the FEI list of Officials. They will have an opportunity to go back on the "top" list again.

Session 2 – Tuesday April 11, 2017

FEI Dressage Working Group:

Prior to the Forum, there had been multiple rumors circulating regarding the Education Group introducing a completely new system of judging Dressage. This prompted strong reaction from Stakeholders such as IDTC, IDOC and some riders. Documents of their comments can be found on FEI website under Sport Forum documents. Frank Kempermann, Chair of the FEI Education Group and the FEI Dressage Committee, along with Bettina de Rahm, FEI Dressage Director gave the presentation, as some of the group's members were unable to be present. Attending on behalf of IDOC were IDOC Chairman Hans-Christian Matheison from Denmark and founder of IDOC Mariette Withages from Belgium.

Frank emphasized that no firm decisions have been made yet. The Group completed its mission which was to Investigate, Identify and Produce Key Elements for recommendations. There will be ongoing consultation with the Stakeholders to establish conclusions and any changes if needed.

The tasks set for this Group were:

1. Identify the perceptions of dressage today. Common perceptions include: inconsistent application of standards, lack of understanding of the differences in scores and biases in judging.

2. Review different systems used in subjectively judged sports and define areas for improvement in the Dressage system. Reining, Vaulting among other subjectively judged sports were invited to present their judging system to the Education Working Group. Frank showed a slide with examples.

3. Identify and address the weaknesses of the current judging system. Weaknesses in current system identified were: each movement is evaluated against many components at the same time by each judge with no record of how the final score is determined, natural biases are inevitable (patriotism, halo, reputation, conformity), many potential routes to arrive at any given final score, very complex, inconsistent quantification of penalties and rewards

4. Issue recommendations for an improved system applicable at all FEI levels and globally. Some of the Fundamentals listed were: Accuracy, Flexibility and being easily adjustable- limit natural biases – easy to implement – user friendly – applicable at all FEI Events.

Key Elements for Recommendations were:

Judging System:

- Introduce a system based on code of points
- Replace the current Handbook with a video Handbook

Education:

- New Course Material – related to video handbook
- Increase emphasis on the education of officials at all levels
- Increase support to Course Directors.

Frank closed with the goals being: Improvement of the current judging system for all FEI levels of Dressage, with a clear route forward to be applied at national levels also should NFs wish. Aim to create a plausible planning project planning that could lead to deployment by January 1st, 2019. This would be 18 months before the Tokyo Olympic Games.

Hans-Christian spoke to several points, in particular his and IDOC's support for the current system. He noted that improvement can always be accepted, but it should be done through more and better Education, not a complete new system, that requires re-training of all Officials both nationally and FEI levels. He noted this would not only create a huge effort from all NFs, but also would have a negative impact financially. He went as far as to say he would not support a new system, rather better education in the current system.

Mariette Withages also asked with a Course Director licensing and Education system, who will evaluate those evaluating the Course Directors? This caused a quiet ripple of amusement amongst the audience, but was in fact a good question for both Groups to consider.