

Session 3 – CSI/CSIO Requirements

I – Introduction

A decade ago the FEI defined a number of minimum requirements for FEI events (the “CSI/CSIO Requirements”) and established Invitation Rules for CSI3*/4*/5* events, to protect competitors from excessive costs and ensure a healthy, sustainable sport. With the introduction of the revised CSI Invitation Rules on 1 January 2017, the FEI has sought to remedy the problem of pay cards by providing an invitation system founded primarily on an athlete’s right to participate, either based on his/her position on the Longines Ranking, or as a home athlete selected by the host NF; the new invitation system, once implemented online, will be fully transparent and enforceable. Given that the CSI Invitation Rules are interrelated to the CSI/CSIO Requirements, and as the new invitation system is applicable from 2* to 5* level worldwide, the FEI felt it necessary to examine whether a re-adjustment of the CSI/CSIO Requirements was required. Based on an initial proposal received from the Alliance of Jumping Organisers (AJO), the FEI requested and received feedback on this question from multiple Federations and stakeholder groups with which the FEI has signed a Memorandum of Understanding; the comments received are summarised in section II on the next page. The FEI is grateful to all stakeholders for their input and looks forward to receiving additional feedback at the Sports Forum. Based on the feedback received, the FEI has formulated a number of questions as a starting point for the discussion at the Sports Forum:

- Is there a need for CSI/CSIO requirements? If so, what should they cover?
- What are the rights and obligations of athletes to organisers and of organisers to athletes?
- How should events be funded at the lower level, at the top level?
- Can existing small events held once a year in temporary facilities, versus events held several times a year in permanent facilities, survive under the current CSI requirements and the new invitation system? Should CSI/CSIO requirements differ for various parts of world?
- Are minimum requirements effective? Could a more free-market system that rewards excellence work?
- Are the prize money ranges for the different star levels appropriate? Should prize money alone determine the star level?
- What should an entry fee cover? Should the entry fee be in relation to the prize money offered?

Additional questions based on feedback received relating to specific points in the CSI/CSIO requirements are included in the summary of comments in section II and will also be addressed in the presentation given at the Sports Forum.

II – Summary of feedback received from stakeholders

The AJO proposal for long-term standardisation of entry fees that was circulated with the FEI's request for suggested modifications to the CSI/CSIO Requirements elicited a large response from European stakeholders, the majority of which were opposed to the AJO's proposal to apply the North American entry fee system worldwide:

- The European and North American entry systems are vastly different. The European model is based on a large number of national (and international) shows, aiming at building up young horses/riders and leading to high performance sport. It is structured from the bottom to the top, is affordable for many people and is based on sponsors' money and to a lesser extent, on riders'/owners' contribution. The North American model is based on a number of high-quality shows with excellent conditions. Compared to the European system it is expensive and only affordable for a small group of riders & owners. It is based on riders'/owners' financial means and to a lesser extent on sponsors' contribution. With approximately 75% of the sport taking place in Europe it does not make sense to apply the North American system to Europe; the entry fees should either remain as they are or the European model should be applied to North America.
- The proposal goes against the concept of a people's sport and would bring equestrianism in Europe back to an elite sport with unforeseeable consequences for the industry and the interest of the media.
- It is too expensive, and is positive only for a few organizers and not for riders/owners.
- It would destroy the structure of building up young horses and riders and the important connection of sport and breeding.
- It would widen the gap between basic and high performance sport, which would result in less identification and interest of "normal" equestrians with the international top sport; less interest leads to less spectators, sponsors interest and media coverage and consequently a weakened perspective for the Olympic future.
- It would limit/make impossible the development of the sport in European developing countries, especially those in the East, where a significant portion of the NF's funding comes from the state based on the number of their NOC classified athletes; NOC classification can only be gained through results at international shows.
- It would lead to a decline in the number of international events, with the likelihood that shows would become national events again. There would be less FEI registered athletes and horses, resulting in less income for the FEI due to fewer events and less universality due to less rider registrations.
- If European OCs could finance their events almost purely by entry fees, there would be less need for the integration of sponsors and media; this also would weaken the equestrian position in the international world of sports.

Comments received from North American NFs included the following:

- The entry fees represent only one income stream for OCs; harmonisation of a single income stream does not account for variations in standard OC costs in different regions or impediments to other income streams. An international Working Group should be appointed to look into a system that accounts for all factors related to entry fees and OC obligations, such as conversion rate fluctuations, caps on entry fees, the role of a free market, broadcast rights, sponsorship provided by owners and/or US athletes and cost of living variations. The new Invitation Rules may have an impact on income streams, especially in Europe. It might be sensible to see how the Invitation Rules impact all OCs before modifying the CSI requirements.
- The initial AJO proposal would be punitive to OCs in North America, but the updated proposal submitted by the IEOA/AJO dated 11 February using the ECS will encourage a free market for OCs to structure their events as they see fit while conforming to the minimum standards set by the FEI. [Note from the FEI: The IEOA/AJO submitted an updated proposal for CSI invitations and entry fees, noting that their goal was to develop a more standardised set of requirements for OCs, specifically as they relate to invitations and fees, with the important consideration that fees could be a significant factor in the ECS. A number of proposals to the CSI Invitation Rules were also received from other stakeholders but are not included here as these will be discussed separately.]

The following specific proposals in relation to entry fees were received from NFs:

- There should be a correlation between the entry fee and prize money but the maximum percentages need to be discussed in detail with all stakeholders. The current situation requiring an athlete to pay the same entry fee for a CSI3* offering € 125'000 and for a CSI3* offering € 200'000 is outdated; OCs that offer more prize money should be supported.
- The requirements for lower level events held concurrently with a high level event should differ from the requirements for stand-alone lower level events; e.g., the OC of a CSI2* held with a CSI5* should be able to charge a higher entry fee than the OC of a CSI2* held on its own, in view of the higher quality of the CSI5* venue.
- There should be an incentive for the promotion of young horses/riders on the lower levels to allow their possible transition to the higher levels, such as:
1* to 3*: The development of the sport must be guaranteed. This requires a simple, fair and transparent system. One flat entry fee as it is now, that is a fair amount and is not "enhanced" in different imaginative ways.
4* and 5*: We should reinforce these competitions with an aim to have the best possible conditions in quality of infrastructures and prize money. There should a fee in accordance with this level, again understandable, common to all shows and transparent.
- The FEI should gather feedback on the viability of competitions at various levels and look at this in relation to the number of starters at each show. It may be that a level of entry fee can be determined for each level of show and a percentage increase in relation to inflation could be added on an annual basis.

Additional proposals received, unrelated to the AJO proposal for the long-term standardisation of entry fees:

- The entry fee should be all-inclusive and no additional fees (e.g. manure disposal, electric hook-up for lorry, parking, etc) should be permitted.
- The fee for a larger box at the request of the rider is an optional fee; the rider should not have to pay for a larger box if he did not ask for it. The OC should have sufficient boxes of standard size for the number of horses entered.
- The lack of requirement of an FEI passport for horses taking part in 1*/2* events in their country of residence could lead to a sanitary risk.
- Horses taking part in 1*/2* events and horses taking part at 5* events at the same show should be stabled separately for sanitary reasons.
- Once the maximum number of declared starters has reached 100, the prize money should be increased in percentage terms up to an accepted number of entries, e.g. 30, above which the competition would have to be split and the equivalent prize money offered. For example: 100 starters = total PM 50'000; 110 starters = PM 50'000 + 10% = 55'000; 130 starters = PM 50'000 + 30% = 71'500, from 131 starters the class is split and the prize money doubled (50'000 x 2 = 100'000). The number of 30 extra riders and the percentage of additional prize money are proposed as an example and can be adjusted.
- For Jumping, it was agreed at the 2016 General Assembly that certain requirements for North American 5* events would take effect only as of 1 January 2018. It was also agreed that organisers worldwide (AJO) would try to present a proposal harmonising CSI5*/CSIO5* requirements worldwide during the coming year, for consideration by the Jumping Committee and the 2017 General Assembly. The USA NF would not support a change to the 5* requirements without a complete look at harmonisation, i.e. change cannot be piecemeal.