

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – SESSION 4 – FEI CHAMPIONSHIPS REVIEW

Áine Power, FEI Deputy Legal Director opened the session by giving a presentation that set the scene for the panel discussion that followed. The presentation set out the background as to why it was necessary to have a review of FEI Championships and went through the requirements and opportunities associated with hosting FEI Championships.

Championship Cycle and Type of Championships

FEI Championships are run according to different cycles. Some are run annual (e.g. Youth Championships), some biannual (e.g. FEI European Championships for Seniors, Non Olympic Disciplines World Championships) and some only every four years (e.g. FEI World Championships (WEG)).

The consensus among the delegates was that FEI European Championships should continue to be held every 2 years, even if every second edition is not an Olympic qualifier.

In simple terms, FEI Championships can be categorised as “minor” and “major” Championships. Youth Championships, some Continental Championships and Young Horses Championships are considered as “minor” Championships whereas FEI World Championships for Seniors, Senior FEI European Championships are considered as “major” Championships.

There are some similarities between both in that both have bid processes and both categories of Championships are allocated by the Board. While both have host agreements, the host agreements for “major” Championships is considerably more detailed/extensive than for minor Championships.

Bidding Processes

Currently the FEI runs a formal bid process for all FEI Championships. Alternative models are available such as a more “direct dialogue” model whereby specific potential OCs are targeted and direct discussions take place according to a more flexible timeline to try and secure a formal bid.

Single Discipline v Multi Discipline Championships

The pros and cons of each model were assessed. Refer to slide 9 of the presentation for further information.

FEI Headquarters Role in Championships

The role that FEI HQ plays in delivering major Championships was outlined. This included providing a primary point of contact for Organisers, area specific support, transfer of knowledge and on-site support (prior to and during the Championship).

Analysis of the Problem

As far as “minor” Championships are concerned, there is no problem. Interest in hosting these Championships remain high.

Although the statistics show that the number of bids received for major FEI Championships over the past 10 years is relatively stable, there is a perception that “major” FEI Championships have become less attractive to host.

Requirements on Organisers hosting “Major” FEI Championships

- **Hosting Fee**
 - o An overview was provided of the level of hosting fee for major Championships, with the hosting fee for Jumping being the highest (see slide 17 of the presentation)
- **Prize Money**
 - o An overview was provided of the minimum prize money for major Championships (see slide 18)
 - It was noted that for some Championships the prize money on offer might not be lower than other top level non-Championships events in the discipline
- **Officials**
 - o An overview was provided of the no. of Judges required for major Championships (see slide 19)
 - o This represents a significant cost for the Organiser
 - o It was noted that each Technical Committee has been asked by the FEI Board to review the number of Officials the discipline requires for Championships to see if any reductions could be made
- **Athletes and NF Delegation**
 - o In general, the OC is responsible for accommodation & meals of Athletes, Chef de Mission/Equipe, Team Vet, Grooms
 - o It was suggested that it might need to be considered making NFs responsible for the costs of their own delegation, given the significant cost this requirements puts on OCs
- **Host Broadcaster**
 - o The OC is responsible for the cost of appointing the Host Broadcaster; FEI retains the broadcast rights but can grant domestic rights to the OC (on a case-by-case basis)
 - o This is a significant cost for the OC; some scope to adjust the level/requirements of the production based on the circumstances

Opportunities for Organisers when hosting “Major” FEI Championships

- **Longines Financial Contribution**
 - o A comparison was presented showing the major Championships/Finals to which Longines provides a (significant) financial contribution
 - o It was noted that for FEI European Championships, Longines “only” has a right of first refusal to acquire sponsorship rights
- **Potential for Sponsorship Income**
 - o An overview of the sponsorship opportunities that OCs of major Championships have was presented (see slide 26)
 - o For FEI European Championships, all sponsorship rights stay with the OC (subject only to Longines exercising its first refusal right)
 - o For FEI World Championships Longines is Official Timekeeper and has brand sector exclusivity and is allocated a certain portion of the commercial rights

(visibility, VIP etc.) in return for the financial contribution. The OC can sell title and discipline sponsorship

- **Entry Fees**
 - o Entry Fees are a way for OCs to offset some of the organising costs
 - o An overview of entry fees per discipline was presented (See Slide 27)

- **Other Income Opportunities**
 - o Public Subsidies
 - OCs can use Championships as a rationale to seek funding to upgrade facilities (e.g. Aachen 2015, Pratoni 2022)
 - o Ticketing
 - o Corporate Hospitality
 - o Food & Beverage
 - o Village/Trade Show

Panel Discussion

The Deputy Legal Director then handed over to Tim Hadaway, FEI Director of Games Operations to moderate a panel discussion with the following participants.

- **Simone Perillo** - Secretary General, Italian Equestrian Federation (FISE)
- **Michael Stone** - President, Wellington International
- **Casper Cassøe Krüth** - Chief Operating Officer, Global Equestrian Group
- **Nayla Stössel** - President, Longines CSIO St. Gallen

The Panel discussed the following topics:

Why do we need Championships? Are Championship formats optimal?

It was noted that European and World Championships are fundamental for NFs as a development tool for team sport. An example was provided explaining how Italy's hosting of the FEI Eventing and Driving European Championship 2022 in Pratoni del Vivaro benefitted the city with a historical Olympic venue being completely revamped. It was suggested that prize money for championships should be higher than regular competitions. The FEI Commercial Director noted that the main value of Championships for the FEI is the opportunity to promote the sport through storytelling, social media, and broadcasting.

From the audience, the general consensus was that Championships are vital for equestrian sport and NFs. The best athletes want to participate not for the money but for the honour of representing their countries. Also, the importance of team building was highlighted, even if Championships are not Olympic qualifiers, especially for the competitive future of younger athletes.

What drives interest in hosting Championships?

For Herning 2022, it was stated that the main driver for hosting was the love of the sport with the goal of organising the best World Championships ever.

It was noted that the European Equestrian Federation (EEF) is willing to be more active and collaborate with both the FEI and potential organisers to secure successful European Championships bids in the future.

Delegates highlighted the importance of events being profitable and the necessity to explore new ways to share costs between involved stakeholders to ensure the future viability of the sport.

Additional requirements and costs

The panel noted that accommodation and meals as well as broadcasting are big extra costs that could be shared. While the WEG concept is fantastic, with all the disciplines together, it is economically unsustainable, but it's critical to keep the value of team sport alive. He proposed a complete reversal of the economic model to avoid equestrian becoming an individual sport.

The FEI Secretary General suggested that capping the number of participants by introducing quotas or qualification could be an option to lower costs. Comments from the floor included that minor championships are absolutely necessary in smaller confederations, but some flexibility for developing countries in terms of requirements could help reduce the costs.

Commercial aspects and income

The FEI Commercial Director pointed out that broadcasting has evolved considerably, with reduced investment from broadcasters. The prerequisite to improve uptake from broadcasters is to have a high-quality product, and the FEI and Longines are investing to make the sport more attractive and also for the general public to engage with the sport. Regarding broadcasting requirements, it was explained that these can be flexible and that FEI maintains the rights to ensure that FEI competitions are broadcast internationally as possible. It was highlighted that a Championship must have commercial potential in order to be attractive/viable.

Bid process – encouraging or discouraging

It was noted that the EEF is willing to be more proactive and encourage NFs and OCs to bid for FEI Championships, but also said that the process can be very rigid and flexibility in some aspects could help boost the number of bids. On the other hand, it was stated that a bidding process is key to guarantee transparency, and at the same time, some aspects such as broadcasting could benefit from some flexibility and a serious revision of the conditions should lead to a fundamental change in the process.

To close the session, delegates requested a long-term plan for major FEI Championships which are regarded as the number one tool to show equestrian sport to the world. A transfer of knowledge between former and future hosts would allow bidders to work together to develop more comprehensive and cost-effective bids.

The FEI Deputy Legal Director thanked the delegates for their valuable contributions and explained that the next steps would be to report back to the FEI Board at the June in person meeting with a strategy to be developed for presentation to the FEI Board at its November 2024 Board Meeting during the FEI General Assembly.