

President's report given to the 67th FIL Congress Ljubljana/Slovenia (June 14-16, 2019)

Ladies and gentlemen, sports fans

In my report this year I will touch upon a few points, some of which will be mentioned with criticism and some which will give information from our day-to-day operations. Our newly appointed Secretary General Einars Fogelis will make further comments in his presentation. I would also like to take this opportunity to recommend the excellent and detailed reports from our Executive Board and experts included in the dossier.

It is important to note that the sport is becoming more complex and many more tasks are now fall within the scope of the International Federations (IFs) and with that, also the FIL. The challenges are greater; the staffing needs and the time and effort, which is required alongside our sport specific tasks, is becoming more extensive. At this point I would like to allow myself a few critical remarks and question whether all these changes are really useful and necessary. The invitations, sometimes even demands, from various organisations to attend seminars or workshops have risen sharply and it is not always easy for us to distinguish what is really important for us and our sport.

A large and also important area of responsibility is our cooperation with WADA, the World Anti-Doping Agency. The catalogue of requirements alone has increased enormously and no distinction is made as to whether a sport is to a greater or lesser extent at risk of experiencing cases of doping. A recent WADA enforced audit at the FIL offices comprised of several days of inspections by WADA experts and confirmed that we are working correctly and accurately. However, in order to fulfil all WADA requirements, we have, as have many other international federations, begun contractual cooperation with the newly founded International Testing Agency (ITA). This all requires additional financial resources and funding and our anti-doping budget had to be considerably increased.

“Good governance”, meaning the broadest possible transparency in all activities of an international association, was also of great importance. We know that we in the FIL have a few deficiencies in this area, which we are working on, but I think that there are limits to be made. The umbrella term “good governance” includes, for example, all topics related to the areas of ethics, corruption, sports betting etc. It is interesting to note that online (legal) sports betting in the sport of luge is already being offered.

An equally important area is the international sports jurisdiction, also known as the Court of Arbitration (CAS), where we as FIL have our own agreement with the separate Anti-Doping Division (CAS ADD). Dr Christian Krähe, Chairman of the FIL Legal Committee has been a valuable help in this area.

“Gender equality”, strongly promoted by the IOC or equal opportunities and the role of women in the sport, generated a lot of discussion. When it comes to our federation, we do not meet the desired ideals of having, for example, an Executive Board with 50% female members. Our current quota at 20% female members with voting rights, which is not

satisfactory, it is however similar to that of other federations and organisations. Even the IOC does not have a better quota with only 26% of its Executive Board being female. Of course, we welcome female participation in a range of elected positions, but we make final decisions based on the candidates available in a secret ballot. In our new FIL Athlete Committee 3 out of the 5 members with voting rights are female. So, when looking at this in terms of gender equality we even have a deficit in male participation

In order to conform to gender equality requirements, we had to closely coordinate with the IOC Sports Department and adapt our participant numbers for the next Winter Olympic Games in Beijing. We had agreed on equal maximum participant numbers for the women's and the men's singles (from 30 female and 40 male to 35 male and 35 female participants). To prevent the real possibility of having a purely male doubles discipline we even had serious thoughts about creating a new women's doubles discipline. More on this later.

On a positive note we are able to report that we were able to maintain all of our previous 4 disciplines for the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing 2022, and here I would like to express my thanks to the IOS Sports Department for their continuing cooperation.

At a recent "PyeongChang Olympic Data Collection Workshop" held in St. Moritz with IOC experts we had to acknowledge that, in comparison to other international Olympic winter sport federations, we have not produced good results in television broadcast and social media, although we have made considerable improvements in the area of social media. We know that in large markets, our sport has limited to no media presence (for example; India, China, Russia, France, Scandinavia, and Africa). We are of the opinion that it is important to keep in mind that a traditional winter sport with a long history (such as the sport of luge) cannot be practiced all over the world and that the commercial interests of manufacturing companies are lacking.

Our cooperation with the "Olympic Channel" has developed well for FIL and we have the best contacts with the senior managers at this organisation. Here we are predominately represented by our TV Representative Britta Semmler-Dzösch.

With regard to our TV situation in general, I recommend Britta's report in the dossier. What we can take away from this is that the total airtime in comparison to last year has risen significantly and that we received worldwide over 370 broadcast hours with over 260 million viewers. However, competition for airtime in winter sports is becoming stronger as more sports, disciplines and race formats are being added.

Our live-streams from the sport of luge on the artificial and the natural track has developed very well and is attracting interest mainly due to the interesting co-commentators from our circles of athletes.

Equally positive are the developments that have been made in our social media efforts managed by our experienced and engaged staff, as already mentioned, on the sport of luge on the artificial and the natural track.

Our Vice President (VP) Harald Steyrer will give a detailed overview of our complex finances. Beforehand, however, I would like to make a few fundamental comments. When it comes to finance we have always acted very responsibly and built up untouchable reserves as a contingency. We have always followed the simple economic principle that outgoing funds should not exceed incoming funds. Greater expenditures coupled with a non-increasing income and a drop in sponsorship funds (hopefully only temporary) has made us look to the future and ensure we manage our finances carefully and be strict with our budgetary policies. The Presidium and the Executive Board have been intensely involved in budgetary developments and planning for the FIL undertaken by VP Harald Steyrer and we are well aware of our responsibility for the FIL finances, not just for today but for the coming years. VP Steyrer will give a detailed report with explanations to the budgetary policies and financial statements

Looking back on our sporting achievements: All in all, we once again had a good 2018/19 season in the sport of luge on artificial and natural track. Although in both sports at certain events we experienced weather conditions which we had not been confronted with before. To quote some statistics, the sport of luge on the artificial track (including the juniors) saw more than 30 competitions (World Cups, Nations Cups, Championships) and in the sport of luge on the natural track more than 10 events which were all well organised and successfully carried out. Here I would also like to express my thanks to all organisers and functionaries, without whom our sport would not be able to operate. However, we were not satisfied with the low participation numbers, but this is something we have come to expect after Olympic Seasons.

The sport of luge on natural track is developing well, thanks to great efforts of those responsible for the athletic element. Despite this, this attractive sport causes us some concern. Although we at the FIL have made great efforts and given increasing financial support, for example by carrying the full costs of the considerably expanded TV productions and broadcasting distribution, the sport of luge on the natural track has not had the same broad resonance with the public. For the last two years we have not had a main or title sponsor, despite calling in a specialist agency. The one remaining small sponsor has not met their financial obligations for the last two years. We have, therefore, transferred the sponsorship rights to a new interested party and hope that this will be more successful this year. Our Secretary General Fogelis and VP Steyrer will also cover this topic in their statements.

The past winter season saw us celebrate an important anniversary: 50 years of the artificial ice track at Königsee. The bold move to build the world's first artificial ice track for the sport of luge (and also two-man bobsleigh) set important foundations for the preservation and development of the sport of luge on the artificial track and for the existence of the sport as an Olympic sport. This extremely important and pioneering work cannot be appreciated enough and I pay my thanks to German Bobsleigh and Sledding Sports Association for the well-organised anniversary festivities.

The idea of introducing a new discipline of “women’s doubles” meant that a new doubles sled had to be developed. Working in close collaboration with our technical department, the company Kästle was able to successfully carry out the required changes. Initially, this new women’s discipline is intended for the Youth Class A and is already a recognised discipline for the Youth Olympic games in Lausanne/St. Moritz. It is very pleasing to see that there is already a surprising amount of interest from young people in this women’s doubles discipline.

The YOG (Youth Olympic Games) are, along with the World Championships on Artificial Track in Sochi and the European Championships on-Natural Track in Moscow, our highlight event for the coming 2019/2020 season.

Under the constant watch and supervision of our experts, the building of the new Olympic artificial track in Beijing/Yanqing is progressing well and we should allow ourselves to expect very modern sport facilities. We hope that this Sliding Centre will remain in operation to encourage the future development of the sport of luge in China and be used for international events.

The continued use of our Olympic tracks was and is still a considerable concern for the FIL. Until recently, all 12 Olympic tracks, since the opening of the first Olympic artificial ice tracks in Igls in 1976, have been in use and have hosted international events. We are in close contact with BIH Federation and the regional local government regarding the reconstruction work on the Olympic track used at the 1984 Sarajevo Olympics, which was destroyed in the war (the President of the BIH Federation Senad Omanovic will provide the Congress with an update report). I also had personal and interesting talks with our Japanese Federation President Mr Kitano, who is very committed to the continued use of the artificial ice track from the Nagano Winter Olympics. I am also confident that the talks already being held regarding the winter use for the Olympic tracks in Pyeongchang and Calgary will be successful.

Our many international connections, for example to the IOC and the international federations and organisations remain good. Since our last Congress, I had the opportunity, together with our new Secretary General Einars Fogelis, to hold many meetings and attend sports conferences which have further fostered and widened our connections.

In a week’s time, the IOC Session in Lausanne will take place and the decision of where to hold the 2026 Winter Olympics will be announced. Secretary General Einars Fogelis and I will also be in attendance. Candidate cities are Stockholm/Sweden and Milan-Cortina/Italy. In Sweden our events would take place at the artificial ice track in Sigulda/Latvia and in Italy a new track is due to be constructed in Cortina.

Einars Fogelis and I will also be representing the FIL at the July IOC Coordinator Commission meeting in Beijing.

I am certain that with our work and responsibilities, the FIL is on the right path. We couldn't have done this without the support of our member nations, the Executive Board, all Expert Commissions and other FIL committees, for which I would also like to express my sincere thanks. I would also like to express a personal thanks to my closest colleagues, the FIL Presidium and the entire team in the FIL office.

Many thanks for your attention.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Josef Fendt', written in a cursive style.

Josef Fendt