

67th FIL Congress
Ljubljana, June 14 – 15, 2019

Dear friends, dear Congress delegates,

A year has passed since the last Congress in Bratislava when you entrusted the luge sports leadership to a new team in the new Olympic quadrennial.

Upon entering the new Olympic cycle, I would like to reflect on the strategic plan of our federation, to evaluate the progress we have made in realizing our plans, and to consider the present situation, in general.

Over the recent years the federation has consequently followed its strategic tasks and upheld its place in Olympic winter sports family. Our latest Olympic discipline – the team relay is widely accepted by athletes, spectators, mass media and supporters. It refers also to the sprint race - today we cannot imagine the World Cup and World Championships without this event. However, we still have a lot of work to do in this area to make the sport of luge image more fascinating in the eyes of our spectators and supporters, including also TV viewers, but at the same time keeping in mind one of our ultimate goals - recognition of this discipline as part of Olympic Games programme.

Hence I pay your attention to the very successful and constructive cooperation between our Federation and IOC during this past year. Following the IOC recommendations in the gender equality area, we have successfully started development of a new discipline – women's doubles. It involves completely new technical improvements. The sled has become steadier, safer and easier to operate. It is also more accessible to the National Federations. Since the very first year of the project women's doubles have helped us to involve young female athletes from at least 11 nations. But from the future Olympic perspective of this particular discipline, the next year and our young females' performance in YOG 2020 Lausanne - St Moritz will be decisive.

As it is evident from our colleagues' activities and general developments in other sports, it

is the success of Youth Olympic Games competitions that lays foundation for the inclusion of the respective sports discipline in the Olympic Games programme.

But when considering our perspectives, we may not ignore the actual situation of the post-Olympics year. To be frank, it has become almost “tradition” that after Olympic Games in certain disciplines the number of participants declines. Here I am particularly referring to the doubles. It is time to discuss reasons and solutions to improve the situation. The reasons definitely are not just financial, taking into account the fact that the FIL support over the recent period has increased in the NF-managed and development programmes. Therefore, I would be very happy to have your opinion and suggestions in this regard.

Following the IOC recent indications, we also have to focus on presentation of our sports, especially during the next Olympic Games in Beijing, as well as in the social media environment, in general.

I would certainly like to point out the very constructive collaboration between the FIL, IOC and BOCOG over the past year when preparing for the Olympic Games 2022. I highly value the IOC initiative to invite at the very beginning the representatives of all the International Federations to the Coordination Commission meeting. It provided operative exchange of information at all levels, and, as a result, effective preparations are now underway in the sport of luge to facilitate the track homologation process in March 2020.

Am very pleased to mention the close cooperation with our relatively closest federation IBSF, especially regarding track building issues. I highly appreciate also the mutual collaboration between all winter sports federations (AIOWF). Thank you all.

In order to successfully prepare for next Olympic key event, our colleagues, under the guidance of the FIL Vice President- Sport Claire DelNegro, have undertaken a very careful analysis of the National Federations' applications and their needs within the Development Programme. This is a very essential activity when considering the future of our federation. We have to find ways now to make our contributions (support) more effective within the limits of existing resources; how to offer more training opportunities for the athletes of the countries which do not have their own tracks. As one of the options I would suggest development of training centres in Europe and America as part of the Partnership Programme. Apart from that we are considering perspectives for the regions of Asia, where, after a track in Beijing has been put into operation, we would theoretically have

three centres available. Unfortunately, I have to admit, that the situation concerning the Nagano and PyeongChang heritage and sustainability is not perfect. Last year we had several meetings between President Fendt, myself and our Japanese colleague - president Kitano, regarding reopening of the track in nearest future. We have received a positive feedback from Korea, too. I am convinced that these three tracks are very essential not only for the regions of Asia, but also for Oceania.

By the way, in the entire China, which has been delivering very intensive backing to winter sports there are involved around 300 000 000 people in this programme!

From this viewpoint, the natural track luge is a distinctive strategic issue within the FIL activity framework. I think that we need to convene a special session to address this issue. In comparison with the past period, the FIL support has increased twice (6 Mio Eur), but we have not yet fulfilled all the IOC criteria to achieve the Olympic discipline status. As it was in the case of the artificial track doubles, we have to think about making this fascinating and interesting discipline simpler, easier to manage and financially more accessible.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all member federations for your contribution in our sport of luge development.

I would like to particularly acknowledge the input of competition organizers during the last season, having provided excellent event quality and luge sport presentation at the highest level.

Certainly I would like to thank my colleagues who ensured an increased quality of cooperation with WADA and ITA.

In conclusion I would like to wish all the athletes, coaches and the whole FIL family to reach new goals and to meet new challenges!

Thank you!



Einars Fogelis