

CONFERENCE 26

EFC - CEE

#FencingIsForFencers

#Eurofencing



EMPOWER
FOCUS
CONNECT

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EFC CONFERENCE 2026



Empower



Focus



Connect

Europe and beyond: a shared vision for fencing

It was a deliberate experiment to extend the Congress over two days, and to dedicate the first day entirely to dialogue and exchange. This created a rare and valuable opportunity to openly discuss shared challenges, learn from one another, and better understand how different federations approach similar issues. It also allowed us to present the EFC in a more transparent and accessible way, within a relaxed and constructive atmosphere.

For the EFC, this first edition was an important learning experience. It required effort and investment, but it is precisely this kind of commitment that will enable fencing to grow and evolve in the years ahead.

The conference also offered the opportunity to reconnect with the FIE in a meaningful way. I would like to sincerely thank Abdelmoneim El Hussein and Gulnora Saidova for embracing this initiative. The quality of the exchanges demonstrated a shared willingness to move forward to-

gether, with a clearer understanding on all sides.

My thanks also go to all participating federations. Your openness, engagement, and willingness to contribute made this exchange truly valuable. It helped us better understand your expectations, and I hope it also provided useful insight into our realities and constraints.

This conference was not an endpoint, nor a ready-made solution to our challenges. It marks the beginning of a new way of working—more open, more collaborative, and more focused on listening and progress.

As we committed at the close of the event, this momentum is already being translated into action. The work has begun, and it will continue—together.



WELCOME ADDRESS

RÉMY DELHOMME - PRÉSIDENT FFE



Mr President of the FIE, dear Abdel Moneim, Mr President of the European Fencing Confederation, dear Pascal, dear members of the EFC Executive Committee, Ladies and gentlemen, Presidents and representatives of the European fencing federations Dear friends
It's a great pleasure for me to welcome you to France for this European Fencing Confederation Congress. Taking place before the European Championships in Antony. However, I must apologize for not being able to stay with you for the entire day today or of the meeting. I will only be there to welcome the federations but tomorrow I will be there all the day.
Today I must attend the French U15 championships which are currently taking

place in Paris. This competition is a tradition for us.

As it showcases our clubs that train young champions. It brings together nearly 800 young fencers from all over France, selected in three weapons. This is a major event for us and for our federation and for the future of our sport. During my absence, our general secretary, Hugues Le Merre ... There he is! ...

will represent the French Fencing Federation and participate in the discussions. I am convinced that this congress will provide an opportunity for constructive discussions and valuable insights for developments of European fencing. More than ever, Dialogue and cooperation between our federations are essential to advancing our sport and preparing for its future. I wish you, an excellent congress with rich and fruitful exchanges that will open promising perspectives for European fencing. Thank you for your attention.

WELCOME ADDRESS

ABDEL MONEIM EL HUSSEINY - ACTING FIE PRESIDENT



Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen.
Thank you very much for this invitation.
I am really very honored to be with you today. It was crucial for me to attend this meeting just to tell every one of you that the FIE will be hand in hand with the EFC. We are all working for the benefit of fencing.

We don't have any hidden agendas.
All countries, all conferences, all confederations in the same way. I have only one standard. I will implement this standard. No politics. Fencing for each and every player, for each and every federation. I hope for the best success in this conference and this congress. I wish you all the best.

I'm here to speak with everyone who wants to talk to me, to understand more about the FIE strategy during the coming period.

The most important thing is that you, as an EFC, Pascal, have full, full, full support from the FIE. Thank you very much and I forgot to welcome the General Secretary of the FIE Gulnora Saidova.

Both me and Gulnora will be here to listen to your ideas. We are very open, very flexible. If the decision from the FIE is not clear enough to you, we can talk about it. If you convince us with something contrary to our decision, we are extremely open to change. Again, we are all one family. We are here to support. Thank you very much and wish you all the best.

KEYNOTE SPEECH

PASCAL TESCH - PRESIDENT EFC

Opening

The last time I stood here in this CREPS it was to listen to the results of the final Exam as maître d'armes. That was the same year the EFC was founded.

Today, it is a pleasure and an honor to open this Congress here in Châtenay-Malabry, as we begin two important days under three simple words:

Empower. Focus. Connect.

Those words are not only the theme of this Congress; they are also a roadmap for the future of our sport.

We will reflect on the future of the Cadet Circuit, on governance, the challenges of smaller federations, sponsorship, and the practical question that may be the most important of all:

What is important to you?

But I would like to begin with something even simpler.

Not with a policy.

Not with a statute.

Not with a ranking.

Not even with a medal.

Let me begin with a piste.

Because every one of us, no matter our title, no matter our country, no matter our role, understands one truth:

on the piste, excuses disappear.

On the piste, preparation matters.

On the piste, discipline matters.

On the piste, courage matters.



On the piste, respect matters.

And on the piste, what looks like an individual performance is always supported by a team behind it.

We deliberately did not put any titles on the badges for this Congress—because every single opinion matters, whether you are a president or attending for the first time.

If we want to shape the future of fencing in Europe, we will not do it with one grand gesture or through important titles.

We will do it the same way an athlete builds a victory: touch by touch, day by day, decision by decision.

Consistency and the Small Things

If we want to strengthen European fencing, we must respect the small things.

In fencing, no champion begins with the final. Every champion begins with footwork. Repetition. Balance. Posture. Distance. Timing.

The things that may seem ordinary are often the things that become decisive.

Small acts build larger habits and standards.

If we want to strengthen European fencing, we must go for the long haul.

Strong organizations are not built only in election years. They are built in daily discipline.

In clear communication.

In rules applied fairly.

In finances handled responsibly.

In minutes recorded properly.



In listening before reacting.

In making sure that when a federation asks a question, it receives an answer.

In making sure that when an athlete or organizer needs guidance, they do not face silence.

The future of European fencing will not depend only on the brilliance of our ambitions. It will depend on the quality of our habits.

If we neglect the details, we will fail at the big things.

If we cannot run one process clearly, we cannot lead a continent confidently.

If we cannot be reliable in the ordinary, we cannot be visionary in the extraordinary.

So the first task before us is simple: let us build excellence through consistency.

Working Together



If we want to strengthen European fencing, we must paddle together.

No president can build fencing alone.

No bureau can build fencing alone.

No commission can build fencing alone.

No large federation can build fencing alone.

And no confederation can build fencing alone.

A confederation is not a pyramid. It is an ecosystem.

It includes athletes who dream.

Coaches who build.

Clubs that struggle.

Volunteers who stay late.

Parents who drive across borders, in sun, rain, and snow.

Referees who uphold fairness.

Organizers who solve impossible problems before sunrise.

A technical team that somehow finishes the draw before sunrise.

Federations with deep resources.

Federations with very modest means.

And commissions whose work is often invisible, but essential.

If one part of this ecosystem is weak, we all feel it.

If one part is excluded, we all lose.

If one part succeeds, we all move forward.

That is why this part of the Congress matters.

It is not simply a gathering.

It is the moment when you decide whether to move as separate boats—or as one big fleet.

Over the last 18 months I travelled a great deal, and I spoke with many of you (some may feel I spoke too much).

But first and foremost I listened.

I did not only listen in Europe but also beyond—in the US, in Asia, in Africa, and in South America.

Europe does not exist alone in the world. That does not mean it should hide or deny its legacy. It simply means the world has changed and continues to change.

This is one of the main challenges of our confederation today.

If we want to strengthen European fencing, we must measure people by the size of their commitment, not the size of their federation.

In European fencing, talent is not limited to the largest countries.

Vision is not limited to the best-funded systems.

Dedication is not limited to the loudest voices.

Some of the most inspiring work in our sport happens in places with limited budgets, limited infrastructure, and limited visibility—but with extraordinary belief.

We must never define value only by medal tables.

We must never confuse scale with seriousness.

We must never assume that innovation belongs only to the powerful.

A smaller federation may have fewer athletes, but great ideas.

Fewer staff, but stronger agility.

Fewer events, but deeper commitment.

Fewer resources, but tremendous courage.

Our responsibility as a European confederation is not only to celebrate excellence where it already exists. It is to create the conditions so that excellence can emerge everywhere.

That means support must be practical.

It means development must be accessible.

It means pathways must be clearer.

It means dialogue must include everyone.

And it means that when smaller federations speak, Europe must listen.

Because the future strength of European fencing will not be measured only by the height of its peaks. It will be measured by the strength of its entire landscape.

Investing in the Next Generation

If we want to strengthen European fencing, we must invest in the next generation before the next generation asks us to.

This morning, one of our first major discussions is about cadets. There is no better place to put our energy.

Cadets are not simply younger athletes.

They are the future culture of our sport.

How they experience fencing will shape whether they remain in it.

How they travel, compete, learn, lose, win, and belong will define what kind of adults they become in fencing.

And what kind of adults they become will define what kind of sport we have in ten years.



If a cadet enters our sport and finds chaos, they will remember chaos.

If they find unfairness, they will remember unfairness.

If they find exclusion, they will remember exclusion.

But if they find structure, dignity, challenge, safety, and inspiration—they will remember that too.

So when we talk about the Cadet Circuit, we are not talking about administration only.

We are talking about identity.

We are talking about retention.

We are talking about trust.

We are talking about the image of European fencing in the eyes of those who will inherit it.

We should ask ourselves:

Are we creating pathways that are ambitious but humane?

Competitive but educational?

European in scope but respectful of national realities?

Demanding, yes—but also worthy of the young people who place their hopes in us?

A future-proof circuit is not simply one that survives. It is one that develops athletes, protects values, and creates belonging.

Fairness and Governance

If we want to strengthen European fencing, we must accept that life is not always fair—but fairness must remain our standard.

Every fencer knows what it means to prepare perfectly and still lose 15-14.

Every organizer knows what it means to plan carefully and still face disruption.

Every federation knows what it means to work hard and still meet obstacles beyond its control.

So yes—sport is not always fair in outcome. But institutions must always strive to be fair in process.

That is where governance matters.

Today we will give you a brief insight into our work over the last 18 months. We are still in the process and far from done—but this is about governance.

Without governance, progress becomes fragile.

Without inclusion, growth becomes selective.

Without development, success becomes concentrated.

Without transparency, leadership becomes mistrusted.

Good governance is not bureaucracy for its own sake; it is trust made visible.

We must cut bureaucracy where it becomes a hurdle and strengthen it where it protects our sport.



It is trust made visible.

It is the confidence that rules apply equally.

It is the assurance that people understand how decisions are made.

It is the discipline to improve systems, not only speeches.

It is the courage to correct mistakes.

And it is the humility to know that institutions do not exist to protect themselves—they exist to serve their members.

If we want athletes, coaches, federations, and partners to believe in European fencing, then our structures must be worthy of that belief.

Change, Courage, and Modernization

If we want to strengthen European fencing, we must have the courage to take risks.

At times, leadership means preserving what works.

At other times, leadership means accepting that the old answer is no longer enough.

We are living in a changing sporting landscape, exactly as this Conference theme states.

Expectations are shifting.

Attention is fragmented.

Young people engage differently.

Sponsors ask different questions.

Governance standards are higher.

Communication moves faster.

Audiences want meaning, not only results.

If we answer new challenges only with old habits, we will fall behind.

So yes, let us protect the soul of fencing: respect, discipline, intelligence, tradition, elegance, courage.

But let us not confuse tradition with immobility.

We should be bold enough to modernize where modernization serves the sport.

Bold enough to rethink how we support federations.

Bold enough to tell the story of fencing in language people understand.

Bold enough to create better pathways for athletes.

Bold enough to build partnerships that help our members grow.

Bold enough to make the EFC not only a governing body, but a trusted platform for progress.



The best traditions survive because each generation renews them.

Protecting What Matters

If we want to strengthen European fencing, we must not be paralyzed by what threatens us.

There are forces that can quietly erode what we have built.

Sometimes it is financial pressure.

Sometimes it is political pressure.

Sometimes it is internal division.

Sometimes it is apathy.

Sometimes it is cynicism.

Sometimes it is the quiet belief that nothing can really change.

Those are dangerous forces—not because they are loud, but because they can become normal.

We must not normalize decline.

We must not normalize fragmentation.

We must not normalize low ambition.

And we must not normalize the idea that fencing is too small to matter.

Fencing matters.

It matters because it teaches discipline in an undisciplined age.

It matters because it teaches respect in a disrespectful age.

It matters because it teaches self-control in an impulsive age.

It matters because it teaches responsibility, courage, and mutual recognition.

In fencing, you salute your opponent.

That single gesture says something profound:

I am here to compete fully.

I am here to fight honestly.

And I recognize your dignity while I do so.

Europe needs more of that spirit, not less.

Leadership Under Pressure

If we want to strengthen European fencing, we must be our best in the darkest moments.

A strong confederation is not measured only by how it behaves during celebration.

It is measured by how it behaves under stress.

Do we become defensive, or do we become clear?

Do we become divided, or do we become disciplined?

Do we protect habits, or do we protect principles?

Do we close ourselves off, or do we communicate better?

Any organization can appear strong when conditions are favorable.

The true test is whether we remain steady when pressure rises.

That is why Congresses like this one matter so much. They create the space to speak frankly, listen seriously, and act responsibly. Today's final discussion—"What is important to you?"—is especially valuable because it

centers the real needs and priorities of federations and asks how the EFC can support them best.

Sometimes leadership means speaking.

Sometimes it means deciding.

And sometimes leadership means listening in a way that changes what happens next.

Hope, Support, and Action

If we want to strengthen European fencing, we must give people hope—and tools.

People do not need only inspiration from us.

They need support.

They need structure.

They need opportunity.

They need clarity.

They need partnership.

That is why today's later sessions matter so much.

Sponsorship, for example, is not an abstract concept in this programme; it is framed as a practical guide for athletes on how to approach partners, tell their story, and build lasting relationships.

That is exactly the right approach.

We should be a confederation that does not only admire talent, but equips talent.

Not only identifies problems, but helps solve them.

Not only invites discussion, but turns discussion into action.

Hope becomes credible when it is organized. That organization lies in our hands.

Empower! Focus! Connect!

If we want to strengthen European fencing, we must connect.

And here I return to the three words of this Congress: Empower. Focus. Connect.

Empower means giving people the means to succeed.

It means federations feeling stronger, not smaller, after working with the EFC.

It means athletes finding pathways, not barriers.

It means commissions knowing their work matters.

It means ideas being supported, not delayed into silence.

Focus means knowing what matters most.

Not chasing every noise.

Not mistaking activity for progress.

Not confusing complexity with seriousness.

It means choosing priorities with discipline.

Connect large federations and small federations.

Connect experience and innovation.

Connect athletes and institutions.

Connect tradition and modernization.

Connect national realities to a European vision.

Connect the EFC and the FIE.

Connect the EFC and other confederations, not for electoral advantage, but for the development of fencing.

I look at Abdelmoneim El Hussein leading the FIE, and at Gulnora Saidova in her role as Secretary General, and I say clearly:

I want to strengthen European fencing because I want our sport to grow and develop

together with the FIE,

together with the other confederations.

Because the future of fencing will not be built by isolated efforts, but by institutions that trust one another enough to act together.

The future of fencing will be built by connected excellence, shared responsibility, and the courage to move forward together.



32 participants



the European and the international pathways can successfully work together.

As fencing develops, we have an opportunity to look ahead, and ask if the Circuit is still meeting the needs of our fencers and our federations, and how we can make sure it will continue to do so.

- Everyone is affected by the Cadet Circuit in some way.

We send fencers and coaches, we organise competitions, we invest time, money and effort in developing the next generation of champions.

The goal is not to criticise and identify challenges, but rather to identify opportunities, priorities, and practical solutions that will ensure the European Cadet Circuit will be successful for many years to come.

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Breakouts

To broaden the discussion the group was split up in different groups given specific topics to discuss.

Event Quality

- What defines a high-quality Cadet Circuit?
- What should the minimum standards be?
- What support do organisers need to improve the quality of their event?

Cooperation with the FIE

- How can EFC and FIE circuits complement each other?
- What are potential risks and overlaps?
- What are the opportunities for cooperation?

Athlete Development

- Is the circuit in its current form supporting athlete development?
- What should stay the same?
- What needs to change?

Accessibility & Cost

- What barriers exist?
- How can smaller federations participate?
- How can cost be improved?

Calendar & Competition Structure

- Is the current structure fit for purpose?
- Are there too many events/too few?
- What should change?

Key Discussion Points by Group

Red Group (Rules & Organization):

Proposed a "yellow card" system for non-compliance with rules. They suggested revising competition rules to be a middle ground between domestic and FIE standards, citing practical issues like piste spacing for large



events. The group also recommended limiting the number of fencers per competition but increasing the total number of competitions based on demand.

Blue Group (EFC & FIE Cooperation):

Focused on the highly successful EFC cadet circuit and its relationship with the FIE. While the EFC circuit is well-established, there is no FIE ranking for cadets. They identified risks like environmental impact, financial burdens of travel, and scheduling overlaps. However, they also saw opportunities for cooperation in promoting the sport, developing coaching, and assisting other continents.



Yellow Group (Costs & Accessibility):

Highlighted the financial barriers to participation. They noted that locations in Central Europe, accessible by car, are more cost-effective than locations like Ireland which require expensive flights. Facility capacity is



another major barrier, with organizers struggling to accommodate the high number of competitors. A revision of the 30-euro entry fee was suggested to help organisers cover rising costs, and a call was made for the EFC to better communicate the importance of the circuit.

Pink Group (Calendar & Purpose):

Viewed the cadet circuit as fit for purpose, emphasizing its role in learning and athlete retention. They suggested surveying federations about school holidays to attach training camps to competitions, making them more cost-effective and holistic. A significant proposal was to create a two-year cadet circuit calendar in advance, independent of the FIE and EFC senior calendars, to facilitate better planning for school-age athletes.



Green Group (Athlete Development):

Analyzed whether the current circuit supports athlete development. They concluded that while the circuit is a high-level series, the step up can be too large for some fencers, making it more about "competing than fencing." They suggested creating different divisions or levels within tournaments. Like other groups, they endorsed linking training camps to



smaller tournaments and proposed surveying fencers directly for feedback.

Second Round :

In the second round only one question was asked to ALL the groups:

If you could implement only three recommendations out of everything you just heard, which ones would have the most impact? Which ones would you choose?

Conclusion:

Three most repeated and highest-impact recommendations were (also in line with the final Slido)

1. Differentiated competition levels and formats (leagues/divisions, more bouts) This includes A/B levels, leagues tied to ranking, plate competitions, and formats ensuring more balanced matches.

Why it has the biggest impact:

Directly improves athlete development by increasing meaningful bout experience.

Reduces early elimination frustration, especially for developing fencers.

Allows broader participation without diluting elite competition quality.

Creates a scalable competition ecosystem (grassroots to elite), which is currently a gap in many fencing structures.

2. Early and multi-year calendar planning (2-4 years ahead)

This is the most consistently mentioned point and directly addresses a structural bottleneck.

Why it has the biggest impact:

Enables federations and organizers to secure venues early, which is often the main operational constraint.

Improves athlete participation by allowing long-term planning of seasons, travel, and budgets.

Creates alignment with national calendars and school systems, reducing scheduling conflicts.

Strengthens EFC credibility and professionalism in governance.

3. Integration of training camps with competitions (aligned with school holidays)
Combining competitions with camps and education modules.

Why it has the biggest impact:

Maximizes value of travel by bundling competition, training, and education in one trip.

Encourages knowledge transfer (coaches, referees, officials), strengthening overall standards.

Increases attractiveness of EFC events, especially for smaller federations with limited resources.

Aligning with school holidays increases accessibility for cadet/junior categories, due to different school holidays throughout Europe this is however a huge challenge.

Final Round :



What is the ONE change that would have the greatest positive impact on the Cadet Circuit?

Wordcloud Poll

✓ 23 responses

👤 23 participants



slide

Outlook:

Following the final remarks, President Tesch promised that the Executive committee is going to start looking into how this could be brought into practice.

ABOUT THE EFC

A CONVERSATION WITH MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Pascal Tesch detailed the EFC's legal structure as a non-profit organization in Luxembourg. The EFC (R.C.S. Luxembourg F1378, ASBL) is governed by an elected COMEX of ten members; the President is elected directly. The Bureau — President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary General — manages daily operations.

A transition plan is in place for the secretary general role to comply with Luxembourg law regarding paid versus unpaid tasks. "For the upcoming elections in two years... the secretary general will not be paid anymore." Warm recovery wishes were sent to current SG Jacek Slupski.

Commissions were briefly presented, including safeguarding headed operationally by Georgina Usher who was congratulated for becoming a Safeguarding Trainer, and Equality and Diversity lead by Pat Ayienuro

Athletes

by Lucia Martin Portugues

Lucia stated the main focus of the AC : "Our main goal is to try to have a proper voice, to say the things that nobody want to listen."



Key athlete problems identified included a lack of respect, excessively long schedules, and high costs. "The competition are, super long, we have to spend a lot of money, and sometimes for us is difficult to be a fencer with this kind of conditions."

The Commission plans to collect athlete feedback directly at competitions using surveys starting next season and present the findings to decision-makers.

Medical

by Nuala McGarrity

Nuala explained the commission consists of six members: "one of whom is a physiotherapist. And the others are all medical doctors."



The commission is providing delegates to all championships and actively collecting injury statistics for incidents causing timeouts or withdrawals. To date, injuries have mostly been "minor sprains."

A physiotherapist provision pilot began in Cagliari to assist federations lacking resources. The service is currently free but will be reviewed post-season. Uptake so far is mixed

Safeguarding

by Georgina Usher

Georgina outlined the mission "to create a fun and safe environment for everyone"



"We have an additional responsibility to children."

The commission is expanding its certification program (proposing 3 more IOC-certified members) and employing a "train the trainers" approach so "it's not all just on me."

Procedures are focused heavily on prevention ("Ninety-nine percent of our work is prevention"). The commission is collaborating with Legal on complaint-handling procedures and envisions a local safeguarding officer in every federation and at every competition.

Coaches council

by Nikolay Mateev

Nikolay remarked on a new initiative hoping for bigger uptake.

Decisions included initiating structural collaborations between the Coaches, Athletes', and Refereeing Commissions to address expected FIE rule changes at the November Congress, and exploring a partnership with the Budapest Coaching Academy.

Legal

by Etienne Van Cann

Etienne highlighted the commission's shift: "transitioning from reactively drafting texts to proactively build governance frameworks."

The commission successfully developed brand and IP protection policies.



Over the next 18 months, priorities include creating a new candidature governance framework to attract qualified candidates and standardizing evaluation processes for Congress proposals.

Promotion and Marketing

by Vincenzo de Bartolomeo

Vincenzo detailed the split between appointed commission members and contractors managing daily social media and web communications.



He stressed that "communication is the first step to promote our sport."

The commission announced two September webinars: one on AI in modern communication (with Alessandro Noto) and another on communication in modern fundraising (with Erica).

SEMI

by Martina Zmaic

Martina reported on deploying delegates to EFC-tournaments. Organisers are often in "positive shock" to receive help.

A critical safety issue was identified regarding non-standardized equipment for children. SEMI mandated FIE-certified equipment for all EFC-sanctioned events: "FIE equipment must be in any level."



Resistance exists due to equipment costs for 12-13-year-olds, but the commission is prioritizing safety through strict communication and education.

Referees

by Vilem Madr

Vilem emphasized in-person engagement over digital isolation: “important to don’t make the decisions on online meetings. We have to talk to the people.”



Education approaches have been adjusted: there are now online seminars prior to events, allowing broader access to world-class insights for referees who will model best practices locally.

The commission plans a dedicated session with national referee commission reps next month to review survey data on differing national priorities and resources.

Veterans

by Pascal Tesch (repl J. Slupski)

Pascal acknowledged historical tensions between the European Veterans Federation (EVF) and the EFC Veterans Commission.

Recent progress was made during a meeting with EVF President Carol Oliver in Cognac at the European Veterans Championship. COMEX recently decided to actively pursue collaboration with the EVF.

An online meeting established the need for a comprehensive survey to capture the veterans' landscape and gather data for edu-

cated future decisions.

Equality and Diversity

by Pat Aiyenuro

Pat highlighted equality and diversity as growth drivers. Initiatives include engaging autistic individuals in fencing, spurred by a roundtable in Italy and an individual's testimony: “Fencing changed my life.”



Health-linked fencing programs are operating across Europe (e.g., breast cancer recovery, domestic violence survivor empowerment).

Pat noted significant government funding availability for health initiatives and announced plans for an online database to share best practices and connect programs globally.



- Jan Sylvest asked about leveraging technology in refereeing.
- Vilem Madr stated AI will not replace humans (“I think we will see each other next to the pit again”), but it can assist with action analysis. He plans a 2027 soft skills meeting focusing on analysis where AI could be used as a tool.
- Pascal Tesch urged testing: “It will not work on the first try... but on the fourth it will start working.”
- Abdelmoneim El Hussein announced the FIE will launch its first trial of referee-assisting AI on 2026-07-08 during the FIE Conex meeting in Sofia.
- Jan Sylvest asked Georgina Usher to define a tournament safeguarding officer’s boundaries.
- Georgina described it as a “pyramid at events” concluding with a final report submission. Officers should not spend the following year handling the case.
- The role involves checking basic welfare needs (toilets, water, soap) before moving to the safety of the environment and interactions. “I spend my first day checking toilets.”
- She highlighted increased vulnerabilities for U14 children traveling across borders without parents.
- Abdelmoneim El Hussein noted two recent severe problems in Asia and Pan America related to safety and equipment, prompting strict FIE monitoring of manufacturers failing homologation compliance.
- Claudia Bokel asked: “What can we the member federations do for you?”
- Pascal Tesch called for ending a blame-oriented mindset (“It is not about they and them, it is about us”). He asked federations to contribute expertise rather than waiting for top-down answers.
- Abdelmoneim El Hussein announced the FIE received A2 governance certification on 2026-06-21.
- Lucia Martin Portugues expressed frustration that fencing systems feel “frozen” and pleaded for the FIE to “go forward” with modernization.
- Etienne Van Cann emphasized the need for better two-way communication between EFC and FIE.
- Abdelmoneim El Hussein promised Lucia tangible dialogue on change within one year.

BIG CHALLENGES FOR SMALL FEDERATIONS

BY ZORAN STOJANOVIC - MKD

Zoran Stojanovic (Sports Director, North Macedonia and former president over a period of 12 years) detailed overlapping challenges: lack of money, lack of staff, and lack of recruitment outlets.

- With an annual state budget of only €9,000, (as opposed to 200 000€ for a handball club) operations rely heavily on volunteers taking on multiple roles (e.g., Zoran acting as president, coach, referee, driver).
- Equipment is critically scarce. A \$10,000 FIE donation from 11 years ago is still utilized and guarded fiercely (“treasuring it like a drop of water on a palm”).
- Despite hardships, investments in youth over a decade resulted in athletes placing well in U23 circuits. The federation launched “Open Days for Girls” with the Olympic Committee and runs a Down syndrome fencing program.



A KEY TO SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

BY JADE MARÉCHAL - FRA



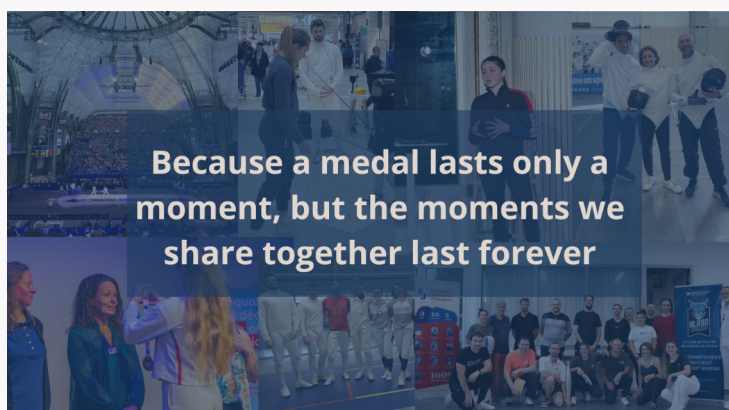
Jade Maréchal, a French foil fencer and professional speaker, presented her methodology for raising €30,000-€50,000 per season.



- She identified 5 bankable assets of fencing: historical roots, romantic heritage (musketeers), strong values (respect, discipline), relevance to team-building, and European heritage.
- She utilizes LinkedIn intensely, ignoring "lifestyle influencer" trends in favor of professional corporate targeting, sending 5 customized, non-AI messages daily to HR and marketing directors.
- She emphasized attending in-person networking events locally, without demanding immediate payment, to build organic, long-term networks.
- Jade expanded on her philosophy: logos on amateur fencing gear provide zero ROI due to lack of TV visibility. "I do not sell a logo on my fencing gear."
- Instead, she sells her time and personal story of resilience, offering masterclasses, conferences, and team-building to a company's employees.
- She shared a pivotal quote from a major bank sponsor: **"If I wanted results,**

medals... I would put money on Teddy Riner... You are giving your time to share with my employees, your apps and above all you bounce [resilience]."

- She builds exclusivity by placing sponsors in private WhatsApp groups to share behind-the-scenes daily training updates. "A medal lasts only a moment, but the moments we share together last forever."
- She advised standing out at meetings by wearing national gear, and leveraging post-conference follow-ups to expand her network and gather testimonials.



FEDERATION CHALLENGES AND THE EFC

EVERYONE

The final session of the day examined the bigger picture: identifying how the EFC can add the greatest value to the incredibly diverse landscape of large, small, developed, and emerging federations.

Of course there was another slido and the plenum was split up into breakout groups once again.



What is the biggest challenge facing your federation today?

Wordcloud Poll

30 responses

26 participants



slido

FINDINGS BY GROUP:

Costantinou Stagliotis (CYP) presented the first findings.

- Challenge: Securing and retaining coaches, intertwined with fair remuneration. Properly rewarded coaches bring in more athletes.
- Opportunity: Connecting NFs directly with EFC committees (like the coaches' committee) rather than just engaging at the presidential board level.
- Recommendation: Commercialize the sport by securing major TV coverage, potentially utilizing the network of "Ukrainian friends" mentioned in their debate.



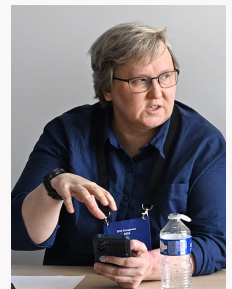
Louise Seibaek (DEN) presented the findings of the next group

- Challenge: Retaining young and experienced coaches in Europe, specifically affording their salaries and preventing them from leaving for outside opportunities.
- Opportunity: "Collaboration." Federations and confederations must work together.
- Recommendation: Strengthen exchange programs and camps for coaches/athletes. Shift the mindset toward other continental confederations from adversaries to partners. "They also need the coaches and... they maybe need to be better at educating their own."



Baiba Brandule (LAT) presented for the third group

- Opportunity: Leveraging athlete narratives ("use athletes to communicate their stories") for promotion.
- Challenge: The difficulty of attracting main EFC-level sponsors, and missed potential in leveraging national sponsors with international footprints.
- Recommendation: "Open the doors to the new people" to participate in EFC operations and bring fresh perspectives.



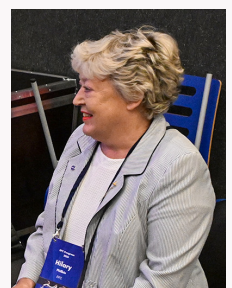
Jan Sylvest (DEN) presented.

- Challenge: "Too many amateurs in organisations." There is a systemic need for higher professionalism across all national bodies and the EFC.
- Opportunity: Europe's geography (small and dense) and democratic values ("we can actually use that force to unite Europe") offer massive logistical and political advantages.
- Recommendation: Dedicate a future congress/seminar to creating a sellable "money-making" product, utilizing outside business expertise and exploring non-traditional fencing contexts ("Outdoor or whatever").



Hilary Philbin (GBR) presented the final groups finding

- Challenge: Europe is isolated ("a little bit on the edge"). There is a vital need to build stronger relationships between Europe and other geographic zones.
- Opportunity: Expanding the existing solidarity programme, specifically event management training, which is crucial for small and mid-sized federations.
- Recommendation: Establish vastly closer collaboration directly between the EFC and the FIE, specifically aligning coaching and refereeing.





EUROPEAN
FENCING
CONFEDERATION

10 KEY FINDINGS

BUILDING THE FUTURE OF FENCING TOGETHER

- 1** The conference and exchange concept has been confirmed and should be further developed.



- 2** Place athletes at the centre of our narrative.



- 3** Professionalise the dialogue and broaden participation by welcoming new perspectives.



- 4** Introduce differentiated competition levels and formats (e.g. leagues/divisions and increased bout opportunities).



- 5** Establish early, multi-year calendar planning (2-4 years in advance).



- 6** Integrate training camps with competitions, aligning them where possible with school holidays.



- 7** Maximise athlete and coach development by making more effective use of the expertise and resources available across member federations.



- 8** Strengthen collaboration with the FIE as a key factor for the success of both organisations, while also fostering stronger collaboration across the wider fencing community.



- 9** Accelerate the development of sponsorship opportunities, including branding, media rights, and television partnerships.



- 10** Ensure that coaches are retained, recognised, and valued.



EMPOWER - FOCUS - CONNECT



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Especially Christophe Crenier



FEDERATION PARTNER

Fédération Française d'Esgrime

Especially Alexandre Rumpfli
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INFOGRAPHICS & TRANSCRIPTIONS

AI-generated



SPECIAL THANKS

All the participants





European Fencing Confederation Confédération Européenne d'Escrime

