



WORLD BRIDGE FEDERATION

**WBF President's Report
to the EBL Officers Seminar
Berlin, Saturday 1st February 2014**

Gianarrigo Rona

Mr. President of the European Bridge League, Yves Aubry, Mr. President of the Deutscher Bridge-Verband, Ulrich Wenning, Presidents and colleagues, Delegates, dear Friends,

I am very pleased and honoured to be here with you and I want to express my gratitude to my dear friend Yves for the kind invitation and the opportunity given to me to attend the EBL Officers' Seminar, a key event in the Federation's life, and to report on activity of the WBF. But let me say that I am very proud to be here with you also in my position of President Emeritus of the EBL and to recall once again the emotions of fifteen unforgettable years.

We just finished the 3rd year of the WBF legislature which will end on 31st December and I am very glad to report that almost all our aims for this period have been realized. I have to thank the members of the Board, who worked with dedication and enthusiasm as a true team, the very efficient and professional employees, consultants and cooperators, the marvelous staff of our championships who enabled us to achieve our goals.

I am pleased to report point by point on what has been done:

1. Headquarters in Lausanne & WBF Organization

The main purpose at the beginning of my presidency, unanimously shared by the Executive Council, was to create a permanent administrative structure for the World Bridge Federation in Lausanne, close to the Headquarters of the International Olympic Committee, SportAccord, ARISF, FISU and several International Sport Federations and to maintain and reinforce the official recognition and fiscal status from the Swiss authorities (Canton de Vaud – City of Lausanne). Today these goals, as a result of working very hard with Marc De Pauw and our Swiss Lawyer Maitre Nicolas Gillard, have been achieved. The WBF has its Headquarters at la Maison de Sport International in Lausanne, sharing it with the European Bridge League. The WBF has two employees in Lausanne, Carol von Linstow, employed part time (since 1st December 2011), who provides administrative and secretarial services and Fotis Skoularikis, employed full time (since 1st January 2013), who provides the management of the website and IT services. Both of them provide their services to the European Bridge League as well and the related costs are shared by the WBF and EBL. The WBF has in addition a Presidential Office in Milan, with an employee, Marina Madia, who provides the secretarial services to the presidency. From a legal point of view, after a very long and complex procedure, the WBF has finally recently been registered at the Registre du Commerce of Lausanne, obtaining its official status required by the Swiss Laws. The next step will be to create a complete centralized and more professional organization, in order to further reinforce the structure and to improve the operational workings of the WBF. This means eliminating the structure and costs of the presidential office and reducing as far as possible the external supports to concentrate all the resources, human, technical and technological, in the

Headquarters of Lausanne. We will start the project at the end of this year, to be able to have the process finished and operative before the end of the current legislature.

2. Legal status, Constitution and Statutes, notarization

The legal status is now clear: The World Bridge Federation, founded on August 18, 1958 in Oslo, recognised by the International Olympic Committee as an International Sport Federation, is a non-profit making organisation of a strictly civil nature, incorporated in the Swiss Laws and registered in the Commercial Register in accordance with art. 60 ff. of the Swiss Civil Code. The WBF is a recognised member of SportAccord – Association of International Sport Federations –, ARISF - Association of Recognised IOC International Sports Federations – and IMSA – International Mind Sports Association –. One of the topic issues concerns the notarization of our Constitution and the introduction of a modern Statutes and its Rule of Enforcement, not only in conformity with the Olympic Charter and the IOC Principles, but definitively respecting the fundamental principles of democracy, transparency and division of the powers. We are working with our lawyer Maitre Gillard and I hope to be able to have in brief all the useful information to discuss in the Constitution & By-Laws Committee to be able to present a text to the Executive Council for the final document to be submitted to the approval of the Congress and contextual notarization.

3. Information & Communication

A second and no less important purpose was to restructure and renovate our system of communication and information. The renovation of the Website and the employment of the webmaster in Lausanne was the first step. A Technological Commission, chaired by Alvin Levy, took care of the matter and starting from January 2013 we have our new Website, managed in Lausanne by Fotis Skoularikis. The EBL followed the same way and you have already received a report about this. Concerning communications, Anna Gudge has been in charge since the same date. We decided to introduce a new element at the Championships, presenting daily films, interviews and a synthesis of the day. In addition added a PhotoStream and published written interview from the players and various personalities. In Atlanta a daily diary was provided. This initiative enriched our communication system and was very well received. We have an active Facebook presence, currently followed by over 1,000 who see the information posted there on a regular basis. Both the CDs concerning the Bali World Championship and the Beijing SportAccord Championship have been delivered to you so that anyone who could not follow directly from the Web can see what it is and understand the importance and, let me say, the value of the initiative. This service will be implemented for the future.

4. WADA & Antidoping

As you know the Antidoping policy is very important also in our discipline and our players are subject to the WADA controls both in competition and out of competition. Thanks to the excellent job done by Jens Auken the WBF agreed with WADA to have the OC Tests the day before the start of a championship, so we avoid a lot of complication and problems and, what is also very important, a lot of costs. In our championship we have 4 OC and 6 IC controls. I want to remind you of the importance of TUE exemption being requested well in advance for the players who have to take any prohibited medication. The policy is very strict and has to be followed as requested to avoid incurring unpleasant consequences which can result in heavy disciplinary sanctions. Much useful information, including the protocol to follow, can easily be found in our Website. Thanks to the work of our Commission starting from 1st January 2013, Beta-blockers have been cancelled from the list of prohibited substances in mind sports. This is also very good news because for reasons related to their health many players are using this type of medication.

We believe and have been used to saying that in bridge doping does not exist, but this is not the truth. Our Medical Commission in Lille 2012 and in Bali 2013 undertook a survey with selected

players from the participating countries and the data obtained was subsequently analyzed. The first report on this work was been presented to the E.C. in Bali and provided extremely interesting results particularly with regard to the attitude of bridge players towards medical substances connected with mental agility. The Commission will in due course publish in brief their work and to realize a booklet which will be a sort of guideline for the health of the bridge players. To remark the importance of this matter and the attention that WADA pays and will pay in the future looking at the mind sports, please check the article in your folder which confirms that "brain doping" is common in amateur sport". Not forgetting that "doping" is not only outlawed by the Sport Laws but also by the Criminal Law in the majority of the Countries around the world. For this reason, in addition to the introduction of a correct health education policy, our Medical Commission is working in strict contact with WADA, SportAccord and IOC.

5. Appeals Committees Cancellation

At the beginning of the legislature we reduced the function of the Appeals Committee instituting the Disciplinary Commission and the Disciplinary Tribunal, giving them the competence on all ethical and disciplinary matters. Then in my position as President I presented a proposal to eliminate the Appeals Committee in the WBF Championship to the Executive Council in Lille, August 2012. The E.C. gave a mandate to John Wignall to study the matter and to report at the next meeting. At the meeting in Lille, August 2013, we heard the report by Wignall and an additional report by David Harris on the experience of the EBL in Ostend, as a result of which the Executive Council decided to eliminate the Appeals Committee and to introduce the Reviewer. The Panel of leading players and the Reviewer have to be appointed by the President before the start of the Championship. The WBF Rules & Regulations Committee will amend the General Conditions of Contest to leave all the decisions to the Tournament Directors and to codify the role of the Reviewer, maintaining where compatible the WBF Code of Practice.

6. New category in Youth

Following the report from Ata Aydin, Chairman of the Youth Committee and Alvin Levy, On Site Organizer, concerning the Youth World Championship held in Atlanta, August 2013, where almost 50% of the participants were born after 2000, the Executive Council in Bali unanimously approved the addition of a new age category, the Kids, reserved to players up to 15 of age. In Istanbul next August the 1st World Kids Championship by invitation will be held.

7. Youth Bridge Development

This is our challenge. You have already heard reports about this and I want to congratulate the EBL and President Aubry, but I also take the occasion to thank Geert Magerman for the excellent job he has done and is doing in the University field, reminding you and myself too that our thanks, congratulations, appreciation and encouragement are absolutely not enough, he needs our complete support and help if good results are to be achieved. I am proud that many NBOs everywhere in the world take care of the Youth, but we have still a lot of work to do. We need to be convinced and strongly believe that this is the only way to guarantee a future for our beloved discipline. I am proud to report that the bridge world looks with sympathy at the youth: to support the organization of the Atlanta Championship, last year, with the help of Chris and Donna Compton, two marvelous supporters of the youth bridge, we collected more than 50.000 dollars from private donations, being able to offer the meals and the participation at several social and cultural events free of charge to all the participants. To help the youth, offering them some facilities participating to the WBF events, we created some simultaneous tournaments, whose income goes to a specific fund for the youth activities. As you can well understand the passion, the enthusiasm and the dedication are not by themselves enough. I hope that all the Federations will understand the sense of this initiative and will publicize these events stimulating their clubs and their players to participate. The next one is on Monday 17th and Wednesday 19th March and interested clubs can

find details on the WBF Website. This year in Istanbul the kids participating in the 1st Kids Championship will all receive free full board accommodation in addition to the free entry. We are organizing under the coordination of Eric Laurant some teaching bridge seminars, starting this year. In the last meeting of the E.C. Council in Bali it was decided to study the possibility of creating a Youth Bridge Foundation on the basis of a Charity Foundation, in which the donations can be tax-deductible. Our lawyers are studying the matter and a decision will be taken at the next meeting of the E.C. We have also another ambitious program in progress and you have in your folder my report presented, discussed before at the Officers Meeting and then at the Management Committee which approved the guidelines, having of course to find the resources.

8. The World Championships Cycle is:

Odd Years:

- World Bridge Teams Championship (Bermuda Bowl, Venice Cup, d'Orsi Trophy) & World Transnational Open Teams
- World Youth Open Bridge Championship

Even IOC Summer Olympic Games Year:

- World Bridge Games (National Open, Women, Senior Teams and Pairs)
- World Youth Bridge Teams Championship

Even IOC Winter Olympic Games Year:

- World Series (Transnational Open, Women, Senior, Mixed Teams and Pairs)
- World Youth Teams Championship (Juniors, Youngsters, Kids & Girls)

9. Format of the Championships

The format of the championships has been changed for the following events:

World Bridge Games:

As you know up to 2004 in Maastricht the name of the event was "Bridge Teams Olympiad", then it became World Bridge Games and for the editions of 2008 (Beijing) and 2012 (Lille) was incorporated in the World Mind Sports Games under the umbrella of IMSA. Following some changes in the IMSA organization and policy from 2016 the WBF will once again organize its own event. The format changes. Being confirmed the Open, Women and Senior National Teams, the Open, Women and Seniors National Pairs are added and are an integral part of the event and not just an additional competition like the previous Mixed Transnational Teams Championship, which has been cancelled and moved to the World Series. It means that the Pairs event will not be just a filling, but it will have the same dignity and importance of the Teams event and medals and titles (and of course master-points) of the same value will be awarded. What is the reason for this decision? The World Games are the WBF Main Championship, allowing all the affiliated Federations to participate without qualification with their national representatives and it was for this reason that when the event was born in 1960 it was named "Bridge Olympiad". We have to remark the importance of this competition and we have to demonstrate our different specialties, teams and pairs, like the other disciplines show the various specialties of their own sport. In addition it will, we believe, provide an additional stimulus for the Federations to participate and be officially represented at least by one pair. Consider that at the present time we have two World Championship for National Teams, but not one for National Pairs. By introducing this event we can reinforce our organization and our image by involving the Federations and so recognizing their role and also giving them the opportunity to receive a subsidy from their NOCs or Authorities, which is not available in the case of transnational events. Finally let me conclude that, putting myself in a

player's shoes, I would be very proud to have the chance to represent my Country in the World National Pairs Championship, especially if I do not have the opportunity of being a member of my National Team.

World Series:

The new format of the event, starting with Sanya next October provides for the division of the Championship into two different phases: 1st week Mixed events (teams and pairs), 2nd week Open, Women and Senior events (teams and pairs), linking the teams and pairs so that a player can decide to stay just one week or for the whole period. As was the case for previous editions all the included events will be transnational. The format is familiar to the European players, being successfully experienced in the European Open Championship since 2003. The Mixed week has to provide exciting and challenging competitions for both teams and pairs in order to be able to attract and stimulate the participation. We should remember that until now the Mixed events have been organized (and are considered) just as a filling.

10. Requirements for participation in Bermuda Bowl & Venice Cup

The Executive Council approved a new procedure for the qualification of teams in either the Bermuda Bowl "BB" or the Venice Cup "VC". Up to the Bali Championship, for an NBO to be allowed to participate, if qualified, its team had to participate the World Bridge Games in the respective category, or if that was not the case, then the NBO could regain eligibility by having at least two pairs play in the World Open Pairs or at least one team play in the Rosenblum Teams for the BB and at least two pairs play in the World Women's Pairs or at least one team play in the McConnell Teams for the VC. The new procedure, effective immediately, reduces the number of pairs necessary from two pairs to one pair. Effective in 2016, an NBO that has not played in the corresponding event in the previous World Bridge Games may regain eligibility to play in the next two BBs or VCs by having one pair play in the World Bridge Games' new pairs' events at the World Bridge Games in the appropriate category.

11. New Victory Points Scale

A new Victory Points Scale has been introduced and was first used in December 2012, in Beijing, on the occasion of the SAWMSG, becoming in force for all WBF Championships starting from 1st January 2013. The new scale has been adopted in every 2013 event, including the European Championship in Ostend and the EBL Champions Cup in Opatija. It has been totally agreed by the high level athletes and very well received by the players, with only one complaint in Bali. The new scale is not of course the "word of God", but is mathematically perfect, it perfectly express the result of the matches and as above mentioned is appreciated by the players. Some complaints from some commentators say that it is difficult to understand for non-bridge players but in reality, any new scale being adopted seems strange at first, especially to non-bridge players but, as happened for the previous methods used, they will learn. As agreed by the Executive Council in Bali a worldwide survey among the players had been provided and the large majority approved of it. The results of the survey will be published in brief on the WBF website in due course. . It should be noted that the adoption of this scale is not mandatory for national or club competitions.

12. WBF Next and Future events

As you know this year, 2014, the World Youth Teams Championships will be held In Istanbul, Turkey, at Koç University, from 13th to 23rd August and the World Bridge Series will be in Sanya, Hainan, China at MGM Grand and Sheraton Hotel, from 10th to 25th October. In addition, I am very

pleased to report that we have already planned and defined the program of the main events for the next legislature:

2015: World Teams Championships, Goa or Chennai, India: The E.C. approved the venue subject to the visit of the WBF Delegation which will be held in just two weeks. We have other candidature requests in case the result of the visit to India shows the venues to be unsuitable.

2016: World Bridge Games, Warsaw, Poland from 19th August to 3rd September

2017: World Teams Championship, Lyon, France from 12th to 17th August

2018: World Bridge Series, Orlando, USA from 22nd September to 6th October

For the Youth events in the years following 2014, we have several candidates including Italy, Costa Rica, China, Croatia and other countries. With Ata Aydin, Chairman of the Youth Committee, we are planning to close the various agreements before the end of the year, to be able to have defined the complete program of the championships of the legislature.

13. International Bodies

As you know the WBF is recognized by the IOC as an International Sport Federation and is an affiliated member of ARISF (Association of the Recognized International Sport Federations) which includes all the Federations recognized by the IOC not included in the Olympic Games, SportAccord (previous GAISF - General Association of the International Sport Federations) which includes all the International Sport Federations both recognized and not recognized by the IOC, and IMSA (International Mind Sports Association) which includes the Mind Sports recognized by SportAccord: Bridge, Chess, Draughts, and Go. As you all know the IOC has elected its new President Mr. Thomas Bach, succeeding Mr. Jacques Rogge. In St Petersburg, last May the General Assemblies of all these Association have been held and 3 new Presidents were elected. In ARISF Mr. Raffaele Chiulli, President of the International Motor Boat Association and in SportAccord Mr. Marius Vizer, President of the International Judo Association. Concerning IMSA, José Damiani, who founded the Association, decided to leave the Presidency after two terms in office and Mr. Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, President of FIDE, was elected. José Damiani was elected Honor Founder President, Marc De Pauw as Treasurer and I am a Member of the Board. In 2008 and 2012, respectively in Beijing and Lille, IMSA organized the World Mind Sports Games and our World Bridge Games (previous World Teams Olympiad) were incorporated. As I have already reported, IMSA has decided not to continue with this kind of event and seems to want smaller events aimed at a limited number of top contestants. So we will organize directly our World Games. SportAccord organizes the SAWMSG, which started in 2011, and will continue for 2014, with the contract already signed, and for 2015 and 2016. SA's new President Marius Vizer's top priority is an all sports event to initiate in 2017. The format will be a multi-city event, spread out on the calendar in two parts: winter 2017 and summer 2018, or early spring 2017 and autumn 2017. The event would include all SA member federations. The feasibility study is currently under way, along with financial planning to ensure that the event would be profitable. A final report will be released at the SA convention in Antalya/Belek in April 2014. The SAWMG would be affiliated with the summer or winter portion of the event and would probably skip one year to accommodate the larger event. The programme of Mr. Vizer is to give the same dignity to all the recognized sports, balancing the gap that exists today between the largest and the smaller ones. For Bridge and the Mind Sports, this is a very exciting view.

14. SportAccord World Mind Sports Games

This event started in 2011 and is an invitation event reserved to 4 open and 4 women teams, a total of 48 players who play, in addition to the teams, a pairs and an individual event. SportAccord pays the travel, hotel accommodation and food for all the participants. There is prize money of \$250,000 (140.000 for men and 110.000 for women) and SportAccord grants \$50,000 to each of the International Federations involved to cover their organizational expenses. In the 2013 edition we had much higher press coverage than in previous years: apart from the impressive daily TV

coverage, via satellite, each day news reports were sent out to >3,000 news agencies worldwide. The criteria for the invitations are: the host country, one team from Europe (European Championship), one from USA and one (depending on the year) from the World Teams Championship or the World Bridge Games.

I am at the end and I hope not to have bored you with my long report, but I wanted to give you a complete picture of the situation and I remain at your complete disposal for any question or clarification.

Thank you for your attention.



**WBF Officers Meeting
Lausanne, 1st – 3rd November 2012**

**Agenda – Point 12
Development of Youth Bridge, plans and programs,
Report by the President**

Dear Friends,

One of the topic points of our legislature is to start a solid and well managed policy of bridge development, with a particular emphasis on youth bridge everywhere in the world as well as bridge in the poor and not-developed areas. This could have a great potential. We have labeled this initiative as “Youth and Solidarity”.

I am pleased to submit to you some thoughts and ideas that I have developed with Ata Aydin and David Stern. It is my fond wish that we can transform them into concrete programs, plans and initiatives.

Our NBOs around the world are facing a series of problems which threaten the future of the game as we know it. We must help them to solve these problems, because they are also our problems and, through helping them we are indeed help ourselves- WBF.

Summarizing those problems, we can see:

An aging bridge community:

The average age of NBO's is increasing year on year as a result of a combination of:

- Limited number of Younger Players (up to 25 years old) taking up the game
- Limited numbers of Young Adults (between 25 and 45) taking up the game
- Even in the Older Player category there is a limited uptake in the game.

In summary our core constituency of 60+ year old players are not being replaced as the older players pass away.

Every NBO knows that the problem exists. Every NBO knows that without some Youth and Young Adults being drawn into the game the future is bleak.

Limited Funding:

For some reason best known to the administrators, bridge is one of the cheapest pastimes available. It is cheaper than movies, most sporting activities, golf, tennis or just about anything else we can think of. Clubs provide supervision and enjoyment for a three hour period and prices are generally less than ten US Dollars (\$US10) and in many parts of the world much less. In general, in every field, if you offer a service too cheaply people do not value what you are offering as being valuable and worth it. It just isn't clear to us exactly why bridge has to be offered as cheaply as it is.

This is the situation, but I hope that, offering of course a good service and being aware of this, bridge around the world should be slowly, gradually and in a controlled manner be increasing the general cost of the game.

This will provide many struggling NBO's to eliminate funding constraints as an impediment to their commitment to grow the game.

Lack of a Business Plan:

The problem with NBO's, and perhaps in common with most amateur sports is that they are administered by, and I do mean this politely, good meaning amateurs. These are people who have a passion for the sport, some time to spare and a desire to improve the sport and its standing in the community.

With a limited skill-set it may be that these organizations need some guidance and it is here that the International Federation needs to take a leadership role. Of course it is always difficult to help organizations unless they recognize that they need some help and in fact the offer of help can many times be rejected as interference.

Clearly there is a vast difference in NBO's with some having less than 200 members and others having more than 5,000. This makes the following discussion somewhat problematic but I assume that the reader will be able to interpret what arguments apply to which NBOs.

The reality is that an NBO is just like any other business, needing a business plan, a financial plan and a way forward. They need to properly understand the regulatory, competitive and commercial environment and have a plan which caters all of these. Where funds are available it would be better for NBOs to have paid full-time administrators rather than continually relying on an ever changing group of unpaid workers.

This lack of professional day to day management, in part if not entirely a result of the limited funding, that is very much holding back progress in building the future of the game.

So the future of bridge in any country is usually dependent on a group of people sitting in a room and making decisions as to how to grow the game. People, usually with limited marketing, public relations or business experience, are being relied upon to promote and grow the game.

Youth and Youth Adults Players:

The game of bridge was developed in an era when there were no:

- Computers
- Televisions
- Satellite choices of 200 channels
- Movies on demand
- Internet
- Wii, PSP and other video games

and none of the many other distractions that attract youth today.

There is a strong argument that younger people do not have the desire or perhaps even ability to commit and concentrate on an activity for a four hour period. Three hours for the bridge and 30 minutes transport getting to and from the game.

The very first thing that has to happen is that the WBF needs to assess whether bridge is past its use by date, whether the game is current, interesting and stimulating enough for us to hope that the young people could be induced to learn and play.

Because the game attracted us in a different time and age does not necessarily mean it will attract people today and we need to recognize this fact.

We all think the game of bridge should be appealing but the reality is that it is a long time since most bridge administrators (me certainly included) were young enough to realistically assess this.

And then the critical and key question what happens if the game simply isn't marketable – where do we go from there.

With this background we will be able to consider the issues more realistically.

The future of Youth Bridge and Bridge in general

As noted above every NBO knows that they have to do something to increase Youth and Young Adult participation.

NBO's invariably cite lack of funds as the reason that they are unable to do more for bringing young people into the game while others simply don't know how to do it.

It is here that I strongly believe that the WBF has a duty and must definitively take a leadership role through:

- assessment the game of bridge and its relevance to youth today
- paying more attention to the online, via internet, game
- development a universal marketing plan which can be used by the majority of NBOs
- development a proof of concept to that marketing plan
- getting a buy in from NBO's to pursue the plan within their world of influence

The first cry we hear whenever we suggest that something needs to be done is “where are the funds”. The answer to this could be easier than people think. If the WBF can develop a plan to increase youth participation we are confident that funding will be forthcoming. What happens at this time is that the leadership don’t want to develop a plan without funds while the exact opposite should be the undertaking.

We have already introduced the Simultaneous Tournament and in brief we will start the Internet Tournaments pro youth and solidarity to earn resources to devote to the initiative, but it’s not enough.

If a solid plan is developed then the WBF could re-approach players/sponsors who have been identified as potentially having an interest in expanding youth bridge. Some of these prospects have previously contributed a lot of money towards bridge (up today only for their own pleasure and amusement which benefits just for some players, but without any direct benefit for the game at large). In addition we should expect some of the wealthier NBO’s to contribute to the execution of the plan provided that the plan is solid enough and one in which they can be confident of success – after all increasing their numbers increases their revenue base!

The plan

The stakeholders in a well-developed plan would include:

- NBOs
- Those interested in the future of youth bridge
- Educators
- Sport Authorities and Governments

The best way to advance youth bridge is to get a buy-in from educators and government into bridge being an important pathway to better developed youth and that participation in bridge improves social and cognitive skills.

We think that the recipients of this document would accept this as fact. However, approaching educators and authorities with this notion without any tangible evidence will clearly result in pathway to the exit doorway.

In our opinion the two actions in increasing youth participation in bridge are for the WBF

1. to fund a study that proves what we all know and believe – learning bridge has a positive effect on the social and cognitive skills of participants and in particular on the education of the youth in the delicate moments of their growth.

We have already collected many documents from the operators in this sector, but a highly credible academic study (a doctorate thesis) must surely be useful to prove this fact.. It is impossible to believe that any single NBO could initiate and fund such

an undertaking and it is the WBF which must take the leadership in this undertaking.

2. To obtain the highly anticipated result, the WBF should employ a well-credentialed marketing executive to be armed with such an academic study and to travel the world for 12 to 18 months assisting NBOs in achieving results with educators and government. Simply sending documents to NBOs will prove fruitless as, even armed with this perfect ammunition, NBOs will not be well placed to take the steps necessary to get bridge into schools and other educational institutions.

A totally trained and skilled person visiting NBO's and educators directly will certainly achieve a more positive outcome. Personally in Italy, when we start with the "Bridge at school" program, I successfully experienced the importance of such a marketing action which gave the Italian Federation an impressive return in terms of schools and pupils participating the program.

Of course this program will have a remarkable cost, but we have to accept and support it as an indispensable investment for the future of bridge and consequently of the WBF itself.

If you share the initiative, my idea is to appoint and chair a Work Commission to collect the necessary documentation, to study the feasibility of the project and submit a complete proposal to the next meeting.



SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENT

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Study shows 'brain doping' is common in amateur sport



By Matt McGrath

Environment correspondent, BBC News

Taking substances to enhance the brain is more popular among amateur athletes than taking drugs to boost the body.

Researchers in Germany found that 15% of recreational triathletes admitted to brain doping, using prescription medicines that increase attention.

Some 13% of competitors reported using physical enhancers like steroids or human growth hormone.

Brain doping is more popular say the scientists, because many of the substances aren't banned.

The [research has been published](#) in the journal Plos One.

Previous studies have shown that, [among amateur competitors, the use of performance-enhancing substances](#) is widespread.

This new work used the responses of almost 3,000 triathletes taking part in events in Germany, to analyse the broader picture of physical and cognitive doping.

Researchers believe that many so-called "smart drugs" are being [widely used to](#)

[enhance mental functions outside the patients groups](#) they have been designed to help.

They are also concerned that competitors in a variety of sports may be using these substances to gain an edge.

In the study, participants were asked whether they had used physical or brain-enhancing substances in the past 12 months. Overall, 13% said they had taken drugs like EPO, steroids, or growth hormones.

When it came to brain enhancement, 15.1% said they had used products including amphetamines, or medicines like modafinil or methylphenidate. Significantly more men than women admitted to both types of doping.

Realistic rate

Between 1% and 2% of athletes in elite sport return positive tests, according to figures from the World Antidoping Agency (Wada), though [officials admit this is likely to be an understatement](#).

In baseball, up to 8% of major league players have been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and prescribed medications. Many [critics feel that this is brain doping in action](#), as the medications can improve baseball players' concentration.

However, amateur athletic competition is very different.

"We were not too surprised at the extent of cognitive doping," said Prof Perikles Simon, from the University of Mainz, one of the authors.

"I think it is quite realistic and it goes hand-in-hand with the prevalence rates that have been found in the US at the college level."

The scientists were interested to find a high crossover between athletes who used both forms of doping. They believe that there is a spectrum of substance use that can include legal enhancements such as nutritional supplements.

Athletes who show a "general propensity to enhance" can end up taking illegal and dangerous materials.

"There is some searching for additional help, we found a strong connection between those taking legal cognitive enhancers and those taking illicit ones," said Prof Simon.

"There seems to be a certain proportion of our society that is willing to take a bit more of a

risk to gain an advantage."

The authors believe that the sporting status of cognitive enhancement may be affecting the attitudes of some of these amateur sports participants.

Athletes are aware that physical doping is forbidden and drug testing is common in triathlon competitions, including amateur ones.

However the use of cognitive substances is not associated with sanctions and therefore abusing them may seem a lesser infringement.

The researchers believe this reflects attitudes in society where the taking of ADHD medicine doesn't carry the same stigma as using steroids.

The authors say their research leaves many unanswered questions about brain doping.

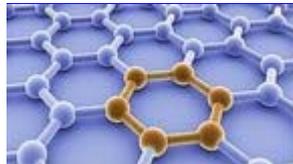
Prof Simon said: "On the cognitive level, we don't know enough about these substances. Is there is a hyper performance effect?"

"What we know is that if you are a patient you are going to perform better than before, but if you are already a high-level performer we don't know if there is an effect. That's the big question."

The researchers warn that, regardless of the enhancement, abusing brain doping substances can have damaging impacts in the long run.

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