

**FIR Council Meeting, Zoom, 19. January 2021, 20:00-21:30**

**Council Members present:**

Anna-Klara Ahlmer (AK), Dan Busby (DB), Amke Fischer (AF), Kirsten Kaptein (KK),  
Graham King (GK), Poku Salo (PS), Duncan Stahl (DS), Marcel Weigl (MW)

Excused: Kresten Hougaard (KH)

**Agenda:**

1. Financial budget for the year
2. Fundraising initiatives + cost saving measures
3. Agreement on when to have the next AGM (i.e. when we have a clearer idea about covid restrictions and tournament resumption)
4. World Tour Finals / Race in 2021
5. New council member(s)
6. Services, resources and help to member countries (introduction to a plan for 2021 and beyond)

DS opened the meeting at 20:05 and welcomed all present at the second FIR Council online meeting held with Zoom. GK was chosen to take the minutes.

**1. Financial budget for the year**

2020 Financials

DS presented the provisional 2020 financial results.

MW questioned the lack of CHA TSF fees. GK confirmed that the Thailand Open, Indian Open and Luxembourg Opens will be reassigned from the IWT account to the CHA account. In addition, the Austrian Open TSF fees will be reassigned from the IWT account to the SWT account.

MW questioned why we paid EUR 1'317.69 for the World Tour Race, which was cancelled. GK will again ask Visual Reality (the company behind Tournament Software) whether a rebate can be offered for this, in addition to the already agreed refund for the unused Tournament Planner licences.

In summary, FIR made a 2020 deficit of ca. EUR 8k and has ca. EUR 7k of reserves.

GK will prepare the financials for audit.

Budget

DS presented AF's initial draft budget for 2021, explaining it is based on the hopefully conservative estimate that tournaments will restart in July.

DB expressed surprise that the Czech Open had already been opened for online registration, given the Czech Republic is currently in Covid lockdown. DS observed that Svata had taken this decision himself, and that the Swiss Open has also opened online entry. MW proposed that no tournaments should be allowed to open registration while the host country is in covid lockdown. A lengthy debate discussed the risks of awakening false hopes amongst the players, granting Tournament Directors more freedom to market their tournament the way they want and regular FIR Council meetings to decide on which tournaments may be opened for registration.

It was voted on whether tournaments may currently allow online entry without FIR approval:

Stop online entry: 3 votes

Allow online entry: 1 vote

Abstain: 4 votes

DS will contact Svata and Esther and instruct them to close online entry.

It was generally agreed that a decision to open online registration cannot be taken more than 3 months ahead of the tournament.

The initial budget shows a deficit of over EUR 2k.

DS pointed out that player licence revenue is unpredictable due to its new cost structure, and that marketing costs have been significantly reduced.

DS stated he wished to re-consider the budget following discussions on fund-raising and cost-saving (see point 2 below).

## **2. Fundraising initiatives + cost saving measures**

DS ran through his various ideas at benefitting from player generosity, whilst offering them something in return.

### Sports shirts

Create a high quality Racketlon shirt from a reputable sports brand which people could order for themselves - could raise approximately EUR5000, if 100-150 players were to place orders.

DB asked whether FIR enters into any commitment which could result in a loss, should there be a lower uptake than expected. DS replied that a loss is not expected, as the order would be only placed with the supplier after player payment has been booked, hand-over would be to 2 or 3 major tournaments throughout the year, with any home-delivery being paid for by the players.

The Council welcomed the plans. DS to proceed with a detailed plan to present to the Council.

### Racketlon Angels

Offering of a variety of services/benefits (e.g. reserved centre court seats for World Championship elite finals, guaranteed entry for tournaments with entry limitations, logo/link on racketlon.net website etc.) in return for a one-off donation.

MW praised the idea, but suggested that the donation amounts need to be pitched low enough to attract interest. The Council agreed on 3 different levels of EUR 500, 1'000 and 3'000.

DS to proceed with a detailed plan to present to the Council.

### Annual Player Licence

DS to plead for players to buy their Players licence already now, even if their first tournament will only be many months away, to help FIR cashflow during the first half of 2021 when there will be no income stream from tournament fees.

### Reduced marketing costs

DS stated that the marketing costs have already been reduced in the last quarter of 2020 by 35%, and this reduction will continue through the first 6 months of 2021, as long as there is no critical impact on the player community.

### Council Member Tournament Entry Fee Rebate

DS stated that the rebate would normally be around EUR 2'000 for 2021, based on the estimated number of tournaments. DS commented that any decision on changing this only needs to be taken once tournaments start up again when the FIR financial position will also be clearer.

## **3. Next AGM**

GK pointed out that the last AGM stated that the 2020 AGM was expected to be held in January 2021. Considering the worldwide Corona lockdowns which followed, the Council agreed that a slightly later AGM would offer the FIR members more clarity, but that the AGM should not be allowed to slip for an extended period.

The Council agreed on a provisional date of 20<sup>th</sup> March 13:00, to maximise the number of participants from other time-zones.

## **4. World Tour Finals / Race**

DS presented, amidst a very active Council participation, a concept of World Tour Finals at the end of the calendar year, similar to those organised by ATP and PSA.

The goal is to stage an exciting event, open for only the world's very best Elite and Senior Racketlon players, in which they all want to qualify for. The restricted entry will be based on a system (yet to be finalised) of ranking points won during tournaments throughout the year. It will enjoy showcase status, offering player hospitality, prizes, referees, live-stream, commentators etc. and so must be hosted by a well-organised FIR member at an established venue. Switzerland is proposed as the first country to stage this event, with the expectation it will move from country to country thereafter. The economics of holding a tournament with such a small number of players means that without significant sponsorship, it can only be held by being combined with a FIR member national tour event. Uncertainty reigns over whether there will be sufficient tournaments in 2021 to organise it this year, as there is a strong desire for the maiden event to be a major success.

DS will further refine the concept and selection criteria for the next Council meeting to approve.

## **5. New Council Members**

DS reminded the Council that two members had resigned, suggesting Jean Michot as a replacement for one of them, thereby giving one of Racketlon's biggest nations, France, a voice in the shaping of our sport. He is well-liked within the Racketlon world, is multi-lingual (making discussions within the Council possible) and is a non-Elite player (making Council discussions more balanced across the whole community). He is very active in Racketlon organisation, having devised a ranking system for France and knows Tournament Software well, enabling him to take over some activities currently performed by GK, possibly also assisting in devising a selection system for the World Tour Finals. He would also be able to assist AK with the new mentoring system for new Racketlon players, put in place just before the Coronavirus tournament suspension.

The Council unanimously approved him as a new Council member, effective immediately, and to be confirmed by the next AGM in accordance with the FIR statutes 9.2.

MW asked which of the outgoing Council members he replaces, as the FIR statutes 9.10 state that Council member resignation is only effective on their being replaced. The Council agreed that he should replace Hans Van Daele, who resigned before Frank Kleiber.

The Council discussed possible replacements of Frank Kleiber.

AK suggested India, as a representative for Asian Racketlon, given their level of Racketlon activity and future potential. DS talked of plans to create a FIR-Asia organisation with representatives from Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore, as well as India. FIR-Asia would report directly to the FIR Council, with the aim of later having their own representative as a fully-fledged elected Council member.

KK asked about including North America too. DS stated that discussions are also underway with USA and Canada to form a similar FIR-Americas organisation.

DS will further refine the concept for future Council discussions.

## 6. **Member country help**

DS presented plans to offer better services and assistance to FIR member countries, such as help with setting up web-sites, launching social media advertising, tournament organisation support etc. MW requested that of member formal registration should be required, as mandated by FIR statutes, stating that this is mostly neither difficult nor expensive to do, and that 95% of FIR members were formally registered at the time of his FIR presidency handover. DS stated that registration has also been requested of all recent new members.

GK replied to a query on passive membership, that the FIR statutes 4.1.2 are less strict for them, allowing "New clubs or organisations within countries not yet nationally organised, and who give all practical support to the formation of a national association (or corresponding organisation) for the country in which it is located".

GK agreed that FIR should improve its governance of member registration with an inventory of member status, to be presented at the next Council Meeting.

The meeting was closed at 21:35, with plans for a follow-up Council Meeting soon (with new member Jean Michot), to review tournament status in the light of Covid lockdown, preparations for the AGM, and further refinement of some of the items discussed above.

*Minutes by GK and approved by DS*