



GENERAL PROGRESS REPORT



UPDATE FEBRUARY 2017



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Special thanks to our Partners and Sponsors:



ESF Congress 2017 February 3-5, Belgrade, Serbia

Thursday - February 2nd	16.00	18.00	Executive Council Meeting
	All day		Arrival Delegates /Registration
Friday - February 3rd	09.00	10.00	Financial Committee
	10.00	11.00	Development Committee
	11.00	11.15	Break
	11.15	12.00	Marketing Committee
	12.00	13.00	Lunch (individual)
	13.00	14.00	Technical and Competitions Committee
	14.00	14.15	Break
	14.15	15.00	Technical and Competitions Committee cont.
	16.30	17.15	WBSC workshop (Tokyo 2020, Olympic Solidarity, Development)
	18.30	20.00	Dinner (individual)
	21.00		Welcome Cocktail
Saturday - February 4th	12.00	13.00	Lunch (EC)
	14.00	15.00	ESF Congress session 1
	15.00	15.15	Break
	15.15	16.45	ESF Congress session 2
	16.45	17.00	Break
	17.00	18.00	ESF Congress final session
	19.00		Gala Dinner for all CEB/ESF Delegates
Sunday - February 5th	All day		Departure Delegates
	09.00	12.00	Executive Council meeting incl. meeting with CEB

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Andre van Overbeek
President

Well, my dear friends, first let me welcome you to this year's ESF Congress. This Congress is a special one particularly for me, as you all know - this is my final Congress as President of the ESF. It is also special as by the end of the day we will have a new Executive Council, who will continue the work of growing our sport throughout Europe. I am sure, whoever they are, they will do their best - as we have tried in the past 4 years.

2016 was a year of challenges, as we had in mind to progress further in all aspects of our work in the ESF. To try and match every year with more innovative and creative ideas to enhance our sport is not an easy task. Marketing and Media are always a challenge and with our special team including VP Youri Alkalay, VP Dejan Jesic and of course, the light of our marketing and media commission, Communications Director Helena Novotna, they were able to create an even more outstanding year for our Members and Competitions. From live streaming of over 91 hours [last year 50] of softball from our tournaments in Europe to an incredible personal appearance at the Women's World Championships in Surrey. I am sure that the future holds even better progress in this area and hope to see more cooperation from our Members.

Yet again our Development Commission has been active in both getting equipment to countries in need, sending coaches to do clinics, become partners in the preparation of national programs and much more. VP Mette Nissen Jakobsen, VP John Austin and Sec Gen Ami Baran have put much effort into the development programs and have spent endless hours on projects that I am sure we will all see in the coming years. The time spent on convincing member federations to participate in the Women's World Championships and the Junior Men's World Championships, led to a total of 11 European Countries participating in Surrey, a third of the teams that played. The continued cooperation with the WBSC Softball Division has allowed the growth of many of the programs that are in place today and without the constant efforts and guidance by Dale McMann, Ron Radigonda and Laurie Gouthro, European Development would be struggling. The name ESCA will become a name to remember and a place for all our European coaches to learn, discuss and teach as we cooperated with three conferences this year already. And more are to come.

Our 1st VP, Gaba Waage and his Competitions and Technical team with VP Gilbert Tobback, have put together an incredible array of competitions, rules and regulations. And with this growth, including the appointment of our newly formed Umpire in Chief positions for Assignments, Education and Development, the ESF will set a world standard in these areas. The new Competitions, although off to a slow start, will for sure increase, as will the participation levels and the recognition by many member federations in the necessity to participate in order to facilitate the growth of the game in their countries.

I would like to give special thanks here to our Treasurer, Eddy Van Straelen. His financial competence and guidance has taken the ESF to the dreams and visions of many ESF Boards. He has made it possible to do all we needed in order to make the ESF one of the most organized and structured Confederations amongst the WBSC Confederations.

I would also like to remember those who began the journey with me in 2009 and who since then have moved on to other endeavours in their sports careers. Thank you for the first four years to Totoni Sanna, Michael Schmidt, Chiqui Vasquez, Slava Smagin, Patrice Benfait and Francesca Fabretto.

As I mentioned in my last report, CEB and the ESF initiated a Joint Steering Committee which in turn created commissions that have been trying to work on different strategies for the future of our sports. We are now entering a new era, mainly because the city chosen for the 2020 Olympic Games is Tokyo. This choice by the IOC opened the possibility for Baseball and Softball to return to the Olympics. Although only one team from Europe/Africa will be represented there, the addition of Baseball and Softball has implications in many of our Member Federations. In some, it does not have any significance as there is still no support from the NOCs of these countries. This is where the Joint concept comes together. In the next few days there will be discussions of the future of the ESF and CEB. I am positive that Europeans will come together and build an Organization that will be the guiding light for all other Confederations. The ESF will provide a body that the WBSC will need to recognize and understand that support for all the development and competition initiatives in Europe will be a priority of the WBSC as only the Confederations around the world have the ability to understand their members, their cultures and their needs.

My dear friends, I hope that my years as ESF President will be remembered as years of progress, cooperation and friendship. I apologize to anyone who might feel that I have neglected them, mistreated them or any other instance that was uncomfortable. I will remember all of you and all the great things we have accomplished together, because without all of you I would not have been able to lead the ESF for the past eight years. I promise you one more thing. I will not stop working for the ESF, I will continue to be a part of the ESF family and assist in any way to continue the great work and the growth of Softball throughout Europe.

Andre van Overbeek

HISTORY

1976

The European Softball Federation (ESF) was established in ROME (Italy) in 1976 by the representatives of six national Baseball and Softball Federations (Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, Netherlands, Spain) of the European continent, with the objectives of promoting and developing Softball in Europe.

1979

The ESF organized its first Senior Women Championship in 1979 in ROVERETO (ITALY), where 6 countries participated (Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, Sweden, Spain, Great Britain).

1991

The first U-19 Women's European Championship was held in Prague (CZE).

1993

The first Men's European Championship was held in Prague (CZE).

Throughout the years, the ESF has grown and today there are thirty-three national Federations or Associations in the European continent, and has organized over sixty European Championships and more than one hundred European Cups for Clubs in all gender and age categories. The ESF has also established many training programs for coaches, players and umpires with hundreds of international Umpires graduates.

The Federations affiliated to the ESF meet each year during the General Congress and is managed by an Executive Council of nine members, elected by that Congress.

1998

The first U-19 Men's European Championship was held in Prague (CZE).

1998

The first Coed Slowpitch European Championship was held in London (GBR).

2001

During the 2001 Congress in SOFIA (BULGARIA) the Delegates of the Congress have unanimously accepted the constitution of the ESF as an Association under Swiss Law and have modified the Statutes accordingly.

2002

The first U-16 Women's European Championship was held in Collecchio (ITA).

2008

The first U-22 Women's European Championship was held in Turin (ITA).

2017

This year we will hold the 42nd ESF Congress. This will be the first time the Congress will be held in Serbia. The Congress has been held in 21 different countries throughout the years and as we see the development of our Federations we hope to see more places willing to take upon themselves to host ESF Congresses.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL



Andre van Overbeek

President

The highlight of the 2016 ESF season for me was... the historic win of Slovakia against the Czech Republic at the U-22 Women's Championship in Pardubice.

I'm excited for the coming season because... I like to see the development of several national teams at the European Championship in Bollate and the first steps towards a merge between Baseball and Softball in Europe.

During the 2020 Olympics I will be... in Japan to watch the baseball and softball games as a fan.



Gabriel Waage

1st Vice President

The highlight of the 2016 ESF season for me was... first gold medal for GB fastpitch, great performance of Slovakia at the U-22 Women's Championship, 10 teams at the Men's Championship and 14 teams at the Slowpitch Super Cup.

I'm excited for the coming season

because... of the 26 Women's Championship entries. Softball is now played almost everywhere in Europe.

During the 2020 Olympics I will be... in Tokyo.



Ami Baran

Secretary General

The highlight of the 2016 ESF season for me was... finishing the season, coming home and finally relaxing...for two days!!

I'm excited for the coming season because... who knows where we will be, who will be winners, what challenges we will face...and how much more we

can make the game of softball a more common sport in our member federations countries.

During the 2020 Olympics I will not be... playing!



Eddy van Straelen

Treasurer

The highlight of the 2016 ESF season for me was... that I was able to visit and watch many high quality ESF competitions.

I'm excited for the coming season

because... we will have elections for the future ESF EC members.

During the 2020 Olympics I will be... very happy if I can be present there.



Dejan Jesic

Vice President Media

The highlight of the 2016 ESF season for me was... a number of European and other national teams shown in Surrey, Canada for the World Championships.

I'm excited for the coming season

because... I'd like to see what development can be seen.

During the 2020 Olympics I will be... in the stands watching the best softball.



Youri Alkalay

Vice President Marketing

The highlight of the 2016 ESF season for me was... the successful continuation of the ESF PhotoFEST project as well as the great attitude and friendship of players, officials, and organizers which I experienced at the Slowpitch Super Cup in Wiener Neustadt.

I'm excited for the coming season because... of the important championships, one of which will be in my home country.

During the 2020 Olympics I will be... working for the nomination of our sport as a core sport of the Olympics.



Mette Nissen-Jakobsen

Vice President Operations

The highlight of the 2016 ESF season for me was... being part of the U19 Women's European Championship in Sant Boi. Amazing tournament with outstanding softball, great weather and friendly organizers.

I'm excited for the coming season

because... I hope to see new teams emerge in the European competitions.

During the 2020 Olympics I will be... hopefully sitting in the stands cheering for softball.



John Austin

Vice President Development

The highlight of the 2016 ESF season for me was... working with the great bunch of people involved with the ESF.

I'm excited for the coming season

because... we get the chance to continue to develop softball in Europe.

During the 2020 Olympics I will be... watching softball and baseball.



Gilbert Tobback

Vice President Technical and Competitions

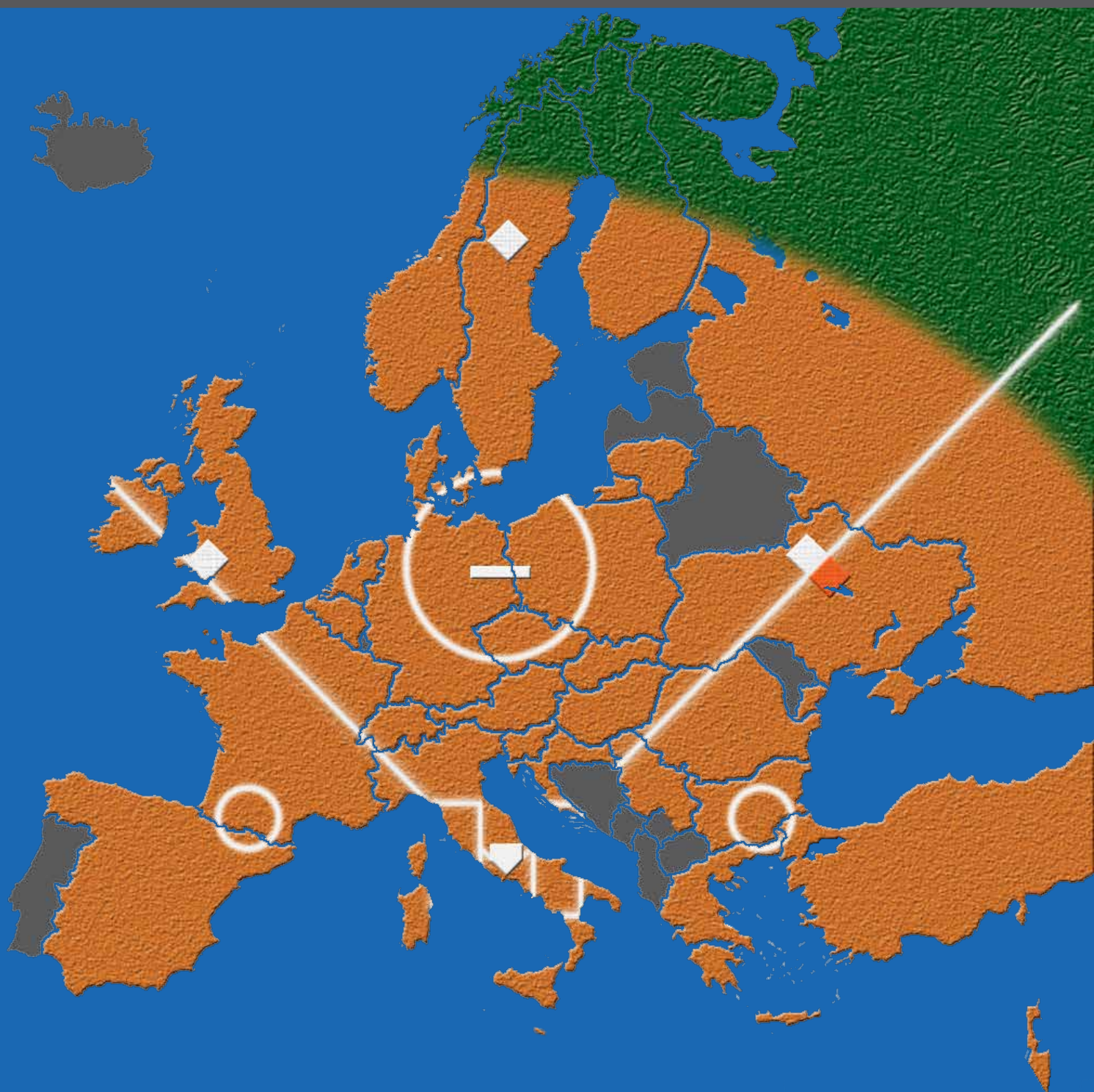
I'm excited for the coming season because... I will be with on ESF retirement and can look at it from a distance.

During the 2020 Olympics I will be... still on retirement.

**NATIONAL
FEDERATIONS**

**NATIONAL
FEDERATIONS**

**SWEDEN ITALY RUSSIA
SAN MARINO GERMANY
SLOVENIA FINLAND AUSTRIA
JERSEY DENMARK SLOVAKIA SPAIN
CROATIA GREECE NORWAY BULGARIA
BELGIUM ISRAEL MALTA SWITZERLAND
LITHUANIA GREAT BRITAIN SERBIA POLAND
IRELAND NETHERLANDS CZECH REPUBLIC TURKEY
HUNGARY GUERNSEY ROMANIA FRANCE UKRAINE**



HALL OF FAME

LUBOMÍR VRBENSKÝ (CZE)

Lubomír Vrbenský spent his entire career with a single club - the Beavers.

The era of Lubomír Vrbenský started in 1996 and it meant a lot of success and multiple medals for Czech softball. Vrbenský played at four World Championships, won the Czech Extraliga 11 times (making the finals on 19 occasions since 1997), won the European Cup for a record six times, and is a four-time European champion.

"It is the early successes that I value most -- the first Czech title, the first European Championship that we won and also the sixth place at the Worlds in 2000," said Vrbenský in evaluating his career, during which he also played in the USA, South Africa and New Zealand.

Vrbenský was awarded the best athlete of Chomutov County multiple times. He withdrew from international play in 2009 after his fourth World Championship in Saskatoon, Canada, and retired from active play in 2015.



Member of Honour

Patrice BIENFAIT (ITA)

Meritorious Service

Jens TERKELSEN (DEN)

Renzo RAMIERI (ITA)

Administrators

Massimo ROMEO (ITA)

Güller ERIKSEN (DEN)WJacques REINENBERGH (BEL)

Enrico BERTIOTTI (ITA)

Anny REINENBERGH-HEUSSCHEN (BEL)

Svend ERIKSEN (DEN)

Renato GERMONIO (ITA)

Theo VLEESHtOUWER (NED)

Umpires

Gilbert TOBBACK (BEL)

Franco BORGIA (ITA)

Pavel PRACHAR (CZE)

Gerard GILIS (BEL)

Bert BREBDE (NED)

Coaches

Ernesta MESCHIERI-CAMPIONI (ITA)

Arnoldus HOUTKAMP (NED)

Players

Vera VAN DE VEN (BEL)

Zednek ZYMA (CZE)

Zuzana ZYMOVA (CZE)

Nora VERMANDER (BEL)

Rita RAMIERI (ITA)

Patrizia CAROTI (ITA)

Renée VAN DEN BERG (NED)

Annemiek VAN KAPPEL (NED)

Caroline SMIT (NED)

Carol LIDFELDT (SWE)

Ludy VAN MOURIK (NED)

MICHAEL STAPLETON (NZL)

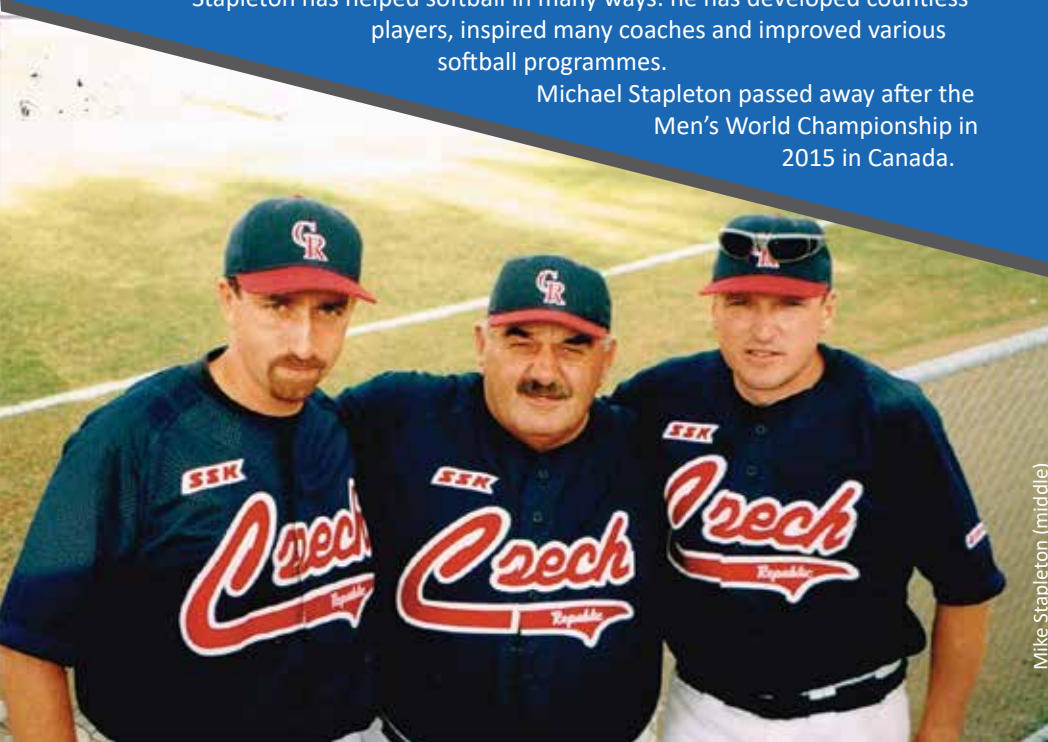
The Czech Softball Association has nominated Michael Stapleton for the ESF Hall of Fame for meritorious service.

Stapleton changed the self-confidence of Czech players at international level and moved the Czech Republic Men's Fastpitch Team into the world's top eight. As a Head Coach of the Czech National Team, Stapleton won European titles in 1997, 1999 and 2008, and recorded a sixth-place finish, the best-ever result by a European team, at the World Championship in 2000. In 2004, Stapleton added seventh place at the Worlds as an Assistant Coach.

Michael Stapleton's mission was to grow softball, especially men's fastpitch, and he also spent time coaching in Italy, Argentina, and Guatemala.

Stapleton has helped softball in many ways: he has developed countless players, inspired many coaches and improved various softball programmes.

Michael Stapleton passed away after the Men's World Championship in 2015 in Canada.



Mike Stapleton (middle)

COMPETITIONS 1ST VICE PRESIDENT'S NOTES

The ESF directly organizes European Championships and Cups, but these are not the only events taking place under ESF sanction. The ESF also sanctions events which have a strong influence on the development of softball in specific regions, such as the Baltic Cup, the Balkan Cup and Euroleague.

We planned to introduce two new ESF events in 2016 – a Men's Slowpitch Championship and a Softball Masters – but we had to cancel both due to a lack of organizers or a sufficient number of teams. This was probably due to not advertising these events far enough in advance.



Gabriel Waage
1st Vice President

The development efforts taking place through the Joudrs International Cup have led directly to an Under-16 Boys' European Championship, which will be held together with the already-existing Under-19 Men's European Championship in 2017 at the same venue and over the same dates. Players on Under-16 national teams can also be included on Under-19 rosters.

We already have an organizer for an inaugural Men's Slowpitch European Championship in 2018 and I hope this tournament will be a permanent addition.

We intensified our efforts to advertise and promote our sport, including live streaming of 39 games from four major ESF tournaments. All softball fans, parents etc. could watch softball action from several types of tournaments, along with the comments of players, officials, organizers and fans. This is a great way to bring softball to the whole of Europe.

We extended our promotion to include European teams playing at the year's biggest event overseas. In cooperation with the WBSC SD, we sent our Communications Director to Surrey, Canada and she brought back exciting pictures from European teams at the Women's World Championship -- another step to improve awareness of softball in Europe.

Pavel Prachar - DoU Co-Chair responsible for assignment of umpires and UICs at ESF events.

Andrea Marcon has stepped back from this position of Director of Umpires after five years of dedicated work, and I want to give a warm thank-you to Andrea for his successful efforts in this very demanding job. Now, the ESF has decided to split the role into two areas, each with designated responsibilities and a person in charge who will be called a Director of Umpires Co-Chair.

Andrea Marcon - former DoU

Carolien Stadhouders - DoU Co-Chair responsible for development and education of umpires.

I attended the 2016 Europe & Africa Little League District Administrator Regional Meeting. We want to extend cooperation between LL and the ESF around the coordination of activities for young girls.



Finally let me thank all of the organizers who hosted ESF tournaments in 2016 and other events supported by the ESF. Your work is essential, because it allows competition activities to take place for so many players. Thank you so much for hosting!

Thanks also to all of the officials – TCs, UICs, SICs, ECs, umpires, scorers, locals and so many volunteers – for your assistance at ESF tournaments in 2016! Your work is invaluable!

EUROPEAN SOFTBALL RANKINGS

The ESF introduced a European ranking system this year. The ESF ranking system evaluates countries according to their Senior National Team results, but also takes into account Youth National Team attendance at European Championships. So this system produces rankings that reflect a combination of competition achievement and softball development. Hopefully, these rankings can help National Federations to be more effective in finding funding sources and establishing partnerships. They can also work as a tool to promote softball national teams in every country.

WOMEN'S FASTPITCH

1. Czech Republic	4012 pts	11. Ukraine	1437 pts
2. Italy	3950 pts	12. Denmark	1400 pts
3. Russia	3687 pts	13. Belgium	1237 pts
4. Netherlands	3450 pts	13. Greece	1237 pts
5. Great Britain	3412 pts	15. Slovakia	1212 pts
6. Germany	2675 pts	16. Poland	1037 pts
7. Spain	2375 pts	17. Croatia	875 pts
8. Austria	2200 pts	18. Slovenia	700 pts
9. Sweden	1650 pts	19. Switzerland	600 pts
10. France	1550 pts	20. Lithuania	487 pts
		21. Israel	350 pts
		22. Serbia	262 pts
		23. Ireland	200 pts
		24. Bulgaria	50 pts
		24. Hungary	50 pts
		24. Romania	50 pts

MEN'S FASTPITCH

1. Czech Republic	1775 pts	7. Croatia	675 pts
2. Denmark	1550 pts	8. Italy	350 pts
3. Netherlands	950 pts	9. Germany	150 pts
4. Great Britain	925 pts	9. Sweden	150 pts
5. Belgium	900 pts	11. Poland	50 pts
6. Israel	850 pts		

SLOWPITCH

1. Great Britain	900 pts
2. Czech Republic	600 pts
3. Ireland	550 pts
4. Germany	500 pts
5. Slovenia	250 pts
6. Bulgaria	200 pts
7. Lithuania	100 pts
8. Serbia	50 pts

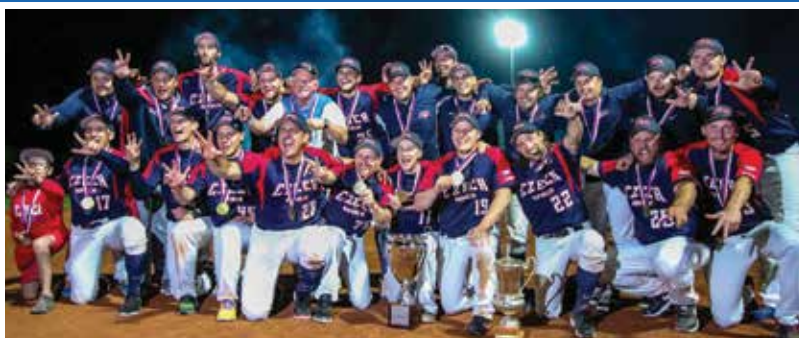
EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS

3 CHAMPIONSHIPS
33 UMPIRES
112 GAMES
456 ATHLETES
126 TEAM STAFF

MEN



Czech Republic



The Czech Republic won the 2016 Men's European Championship, held in Montegranaro, Italy, for the third time in a row and went through the tournament as the only undefeated team. This was the third time the Czechs had won three consecutive Men's Championships, but it was the first time that the same Head Coach - Tomas Kusy - had led the team to all three titles.

Denmark placed second and Belgium took the bronze medal, which was a historic success for their softball programme. With 10 teams taking part, this was the largest Men's Championship ever held in Europe.

National teams from Germany, Sweden and Italy premiered at the tournament, and everyone who watched their games was amazed by the enthusiasm and excitement these teams brought to the field.

U-19 WOMEN



Great Britain



Great Britain had never won a European Championship in baseball or fastpitch softball until the 2016 Junior Women's Championship in Sant Boi, Spain. But led by a talented pitcher, Georgina Corrick, the GB Juniors won a historic first title for their country.

The final, GB v Italy, was a close and well-played game that was scoreless until the final inning, when GB scored the walk-off run that won the title. In the end, Italy was second and the Czech Republic placed third out of a total of 12 teams.

U-22 WOMEN



Netherlands



The Dutch team participated in the Women's Under-22 European Championship for the first time in their history in 2016. A team that may represent the Dutch Olympic future dominated the tournament and remained undefeated. Team Russia, which took the silver medal, was the only team that could challenge the Dutch. The Czech Republic placed third.

There were a few teams in the competition who had recently started their softball programme or were working on re-establishing their programme, and participation itself was a huge step for these teams.

A total of eight teams competed in this tournament, held in Pardubice in the Czech Republic.

EUROPEAN CUP WINNERS



H2O (GBR) - Coed Slowpitch Super Cup

In 2016, for the first time, European Cups were open to an unlimited number of European players, as only non-European passport holders were considered pick-up players. The result was that the level of play in all European Cups increased. And thanks to the new rules, a team representing Malta entered an official European competition for the first time in the country's history. This team secured a spot in the 2017 Women's Premiere Cup for the Maltese Softball Federation by winning the Women's Cup.

Winner of the Men's Super Cup was the defending champion from 2015 and the Dutch dominated in the top two Women's Cups and the Men's ESF Cup.

Meanwhile, British teams keep proving their slowpitch hegemony. Teams from Great Britain finished first and second in a Slowpitch Super Cup that had a record number of 14 teams.

Our development tournament - the European Massimo Romeo Youth Trophy - was open to boys as well as girls for the first time. This event is organized to offer the youngest players the feel of a European tournament, and the Development Commission, together with the Competitions Commission, is reviewing the best direction for this event in the future.



Sparks Haarlem (NED) - Premiere Cup Women



Pro Roma (ITA) - Super Cup Men



BSC Quick (NED) - ESF Cup Men



Olympia Haarlem (NED) - Cup Winner's Cup Women



Mediterraneo (MLT) - Cup Women



Italy (ITA) - EMRYT

MEDIA



Youri Alkalay
VP Marketing



Dejan Jesic
VP Media



Helena Novotna
Communications Director



3322 → 7165 (+115%)

After 2015, when our Facebook page followers doubled, we recorded another great increase in new followers to our major communication channel in 2016.

Besides being used to share news, results and photos, Facebook was also the place where some of our marketing projects were located.

The video contest “My Favorite Softball Drill” gained a remarkable amount of attention despite a low number of submitted videos. Both PhotoFESTs, held after the end of softball season, turned out successfully and helped to widen our audience base.

Trends for the last decade show that videos are exceptionally powerful tools, and this has been the case with the video outputs we’ve published in 2016. All expectations were exceeded by a fun video, submitted by the German slowpitch team UCE Travellers, when this clip reached over 600k unique users.



1298 → 1821 (+40%)

Due to a low usage of Twitter in Europe, no special campaigns for Twitter took place in 2016. The ESF is using this channel mainly for sharing our content and for keeping in touch with our partners and friends from all over the world, such as Little League, USA Softball, NFCA etc. Twitter is also the place where we’re working on being noticed by media sites such as Inside the Games, Women in Sports etc.



We used the occasion of “PhotoFEST for Pros” to create an Instagram account. Utilization and objectives for this platform in 2017 have not yet been set.



Our use of YouTube has not changed: all condensed games shot at ESF tournaments were uploaded to the account as well as other video outputs. Daily summaries from the Men’s Championship were provided to fans of men’s fastpitch, and special attention was brought to ESF umpires.



The frequency of newsletters and press releases has depended on current needs, priorities and the amount of news available. While newsletters are designed to inform the softball community, press releases are sent to various external media providers. There’s still a long way to go, but we were successful in 2016, with several articles from our press releases having been published by Inside the Games, European Baseball Magazine and Mister Baseball.

Cooperation with the WBSC has been exceptional; a large amount of news from European softball was featured on the WBSC website or in their newsletter in 2016.

LIVE STREAMING
43 789 LIVE VIEWS
38 GAMES
4 TOURNAMENTS
137 061 TOTAL VIEWS

Games from four tournaments were broadcast in 2016, all by the company Playo.tv. Over the course of our relationship with Playo.tv, the quality of the live streams they produce has increased. Sadly, however, the Internet connection in certain locations sometimes causes problems.

All our live streams were available for free, and all the recorded games are still available online. In the figures below, you can see the number of views recorded during the live streaming, and the absolute number of views generated after the tournaments were over.

In the coming season, our focus will again be on the promotion of the live streaming, and we want to develop better coordination between the broadcast and what is happening on the field to make the production more professional and the watching experience more enjoyable.



EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP U-22 WOMEN

9	8	14 622	37 764
broadcast games	teams	total live views	total views in 2016

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP JUNIOR WOMEN

9	12	9 833	49 416
broadcast games	teams	total live views	total views in 2016

EUROPEAN PREMIERE CUP WOMEN

11	9	8 569	19 429
broadcast games	teams	total live views	total views in 2016

EUROPEAN SUPER CUP MEN

9	18	10 765	27 948
broadcast games	teams	total live views	total views in 2016

During the WBSC Women's World Championship in Canada, we took part in the WBSC SD media coverage by preparing highlight videos and assisting on site. We delivered footage and requested materials to enable European countries to promote their national teams and we also focused on bringing updates and interviews to the general European softball audience.



In October, ESF Communications Director travelled to the Little League Headquarters for an internship and spent a week exploring how marketing and media work in this organization. She was given insights into many areas where LL is getting good results.

With support from the WBSC, we've established the Global Softball Communication Group for sharing major news about softball in various regions, including live streaming announcements and interesting media and marketing projects. The regions represented are Asia, South and Central America, Australia, Canada, Europe, New Zealand and USA, and a representative from the WBSC is a member of the group.



DEVELOPMENT



Ami Baran
Secretary General



Mette Nissen-Jakobsen
VP Operations

AUSTRIA

One of the highlights this year in Austria was the cooperation between the ESF DC and Gabriele Hardinger, in charge of Austrian Softball. The Austrians who have been gaining progress in the past few years made a decision to participate at the Women's World Championships in Surrey. This decision led to a plan of training for the event and included the ESF sending Top Coach Craig Montvidas to help out jump start the plan.

As it all planned out, the Austrians had a great run at the Championships, with veteran Connie Chwojka leading the way pitching for the National Team.

We trust that after this great experience Austrian Softball will grow and the ESF DC are committed in assisting in that vision. We hope that the ideas of providing coaching courses for Physical Education teachers and a similar pilot course along with providing extra equipment will enhance their efforts.



BELGIUM

Although struggling with growing the sport, the Belgian Federation along with Rita Ceuppens are trying to hang in there and have requested assistance in preparing a developmental plan that will carry them forward. After some discussions the ESF DC will now provide a plan based on the needs of the Federation and we hope that this will lead to the revival of Belgium Softball.

SWEDEN



As we have reported on a yearly basis, the Baltic Open initiated by VP Mette Nissen-Jakobsen and Krisitain Palvia has brought the Swedish Federation to the point of sending, for the first time ever, a team to the European Men's Fastpitch Championship. An incredible achievement in itself the Swedish team played vigorously and gained the respect of the other teams, who have been playing for years.

Beeball materials translated into Swedish were completed and we hope that this is the case of another country who will use this important tool for the growth of Baseball and Softball.

Swedish Head Coach Mattias Grimstoft took a group of 6 players to Clearwater and Fort Meyers, where they received coaching in pitching and catching during a two week training camp.

GERMANY

The German Baseball and Softball Federation are in progressive development mode and with the leadership of Mirko Heid and his team, the prospect of German softball growth looks good. The Paderborn Coaches Conference has turned into a regular base for the ESF and ESCA to partner with the DBV and will for sure be one of the major Conferences for the future of both baseball and softball coaching conferences.

The DBV has helped the Men's Fastpitch program and after many years a German Men's Fastpitch team played at the European Men's Fastpitch Championship. The ESF DC provided coaches for the team in pitching and hitting and the continued support throughout the year will make this one of the top teams that Europe will be hearing about in the future.

The Slowpitch program has been growing and along with the British Softball Federation the ESF has been involved in the enhancement of the program.



FINLAND

Tony Jones has been working endlessly and alone in his Federation trying to revive the Softball entity of the Finnish Federation. The reinstatement of Baseball and Softball has brought the Pesapallo Federation to decide to put an effort in creating the Finnish National team and have them participate this year at the Women's European Championships in Italy. Equipment was sent and we are now preparing to have a coach travel and assist Tony to build the team.

POLAND



The new leadership of the Polish Federation has begun to put into place a new plan which involves developing their grassroots and changing of the structure in their Federation. The ESF DC is committed in assisting Christopher Sweeney and his new board and already has found a way. Coach Ben Ten Pas has found it a great challenge and has been spending time with the Polish teams and we hope this cooperation will continue in the future.

LITHUANIA

Lithuania is becoming a softball entity that our other members will need to consider when playing them in championships and cups. The leadership of Virmidas Neverauskas has enabled the production of a group of outstanding young players. They have participated in the Baltic Open and even a small group of men played there in order to jumpstart their men's fastpitch program as well. They received equipment from the last ESF DC shipment and we hope that it helps their future.

Not only do they play but they also hold tournaments as they held their annual indoor tournament in Vilnius. Great things are happening in Lithuania.



CZECH REPUBLIC

The ESF DC does not usually need to assist the powerful federation of the Czechs but in some cases it is an honor to be able to be a part of the programs that are initiated by the Czech Federation. A special camp for U13 and U16 boys is held annually with the hope of structuring championships for those ages [the U16 is already being implemented in 2017] and this year the ESF DC provided Balls and an instructor along with encouraging countries like Israel and Denmark to send their boys. This camp has been a success and the ESF will continue to support this project.

SPAIN



The Spanish Federation has taken a step to embracing their men's fastpitch program as the Men's Fastpitch Championship was held in June in San Sebastian. During this visit in meetings held with the responsible persons from the men's teams and Jordi Valles, the then Executive Director, it was decided that the men's teams will conform to all the rules and regulations of the Spanish Federation and will move forward.

The Junior Women's Championship was held in Spain and the ESF DC was again proud to be able to provide along with the partnership of the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Sports Commission, clinics held by USA Olympian Michele Smith. The teams came out and trained with Michele and learned a lot to take back to their training for next season.



DEVELOPMENT

EQUIPMENT FOR EUROPE

Like every year, the ESF DC continues to gather equipment from the USA and ship it to Europe through the generosity of our VP Youri Alkalay. With at least three shipments a year the ESF DC is able to provide some help for the continued efforts of our Member Federations in growing the sport of softball and in many cases also baseball, as we do not just collect for ESF members but also for CEB members, as we all know many of our federations are joint federations and we do not see just the color or size of the ball or the make of the bats.

EUROPEAN SOFTBALL COACHES ASSOCIATION

ESCA has been moving forward although not at the pace we believed it would. One of the main initiatives is the full cooperation and partnerships we have with the Member Federations who have their own Coaches Conferences. We have found this to be a very productive avenue for the enrichment of the coaches' knowledge throughout Europe and have taken the opportunity to be an integral part of such Conferences.



This year we sent Coaches Lilly Rossetti to the Swedish Coaches Conference, Craig Montvidas, Enrico Obletter, Karen Marr and Dinet Oosting to the DBV Paderborn Conference, and with the continued cooperation and support of USA Softball Executive Director Craig Cress and President Warren Jones we were able to secure Head Coach of USA Slowpitch team Steve Shortland and USA Softball Team Pitcher Jessica Moore to attend the Great Britain Coaches Summit.

We believe this is only the beginning as we have planned the new structure and the new website which we hope will be active immediately after the Congress.

We would also like to mention that ESF ESCA provided clinics for pitchers and coaches throughout the tournament season and we shall continue this development initiative in the years to come.

EUROLEAGUE



In 2016, eight teams from five countries participated in the Euroleague. A total of 64 games were hosted by four countries. The participating teams were: Princ Zagreb (CRO), Apollo Bratislava (SVK), Trnava Panthers (SVK), Vienna M-stars (AUT), Lady Pirates Zagreb (CRO), Zraloci Ledenice (CZE), Hungarian Astros (HUN), Budapest Reds (HUN)

This year, the Euroleague will continue in its original region, but efforts are made to expand this project.

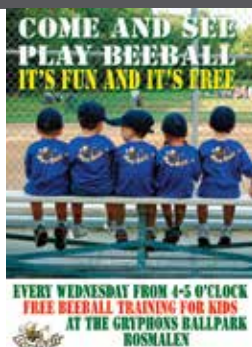
We're in communication with five new teams about their possibility to establish Euroleague in their region, or to take part in the current one.

We're also looking at Men's Euroleague. At this moment, we're considering two tournaments, with four participants. We're in the phase of preparations still, hopefully we'll be successful in making the Men's Euroleague work.

In 2017, there will be a new regional tournament added into the Euroleague project. Northern region will hold its fourth edition of Baltic Open, which will now become the Baltic Euroleague.



BEEBALL



The Beeball Commission carried out many clinics and produced many new materials which became available on the ESF/CEB websites.

BeeBall is now played in Spain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Lithuania, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria.

In 2017 the last clinic will be given in Croatia. Also starting this year, the clinics policy will be changed according to the products which are now available on the website.

Some of these items were produced in kind cooperation of the Canadian and Australian federations

The ESF/CEB will be looking into other interesting ways of promoting our sport to the younger generation and will consequently share them with the Federations.

SLOWPITCH



John Austin
VP Development

2016 was a good year for the development of slowpitch in Europe. There were two key highlights, the first being the 11th Coed Slowpitch Super Cup held in the Wiener Neustadt in Austria, and the second being USA National Team Head Coach, Steve Shortland providing 3 days of clinics at the same event.



The 2016 Super Cup was the largest in its history with 14 teams from 7 member federations competing. Despite not having it all their own way in recent years at club level, the participating teams from Great Britain have always been the ones to beat and at this tournament they re-established their dominance by providing both the winners (H20) and the runners up (London Chromies).



With more and more member federations developing their slowpitch programmes we can look forward to continued growth for the slowpitch Super Cup.

Thanks to our continued cooperation with USA Softball and their generosity a key highlight of the Super Cup was the development clinic given by USA Slow Pitch National Team Head Coach Steve Shortland. Steve attended the Super Cup for 2 and a half days and in that period managed to provide development clinics for 12 of the participating teams.

Following the positive feedback received for this type of clinic, the Development Commission will be looking to do more of them at our slowpitch tournaments.

Interest in the slowpitch format continues to grow. During the year we have been in contact with an increasing number of our member federations who are seeking our assistance with either establishing slowpitch programmes or developing existing ones.

As we look to 2017 and beyond, the future for slowpitch in Europe looks bright.

