

Ladies and gentlemen of the WBF Executive Council,

Given all the topics we have to cover, I will try to be brief and, above all, to present a proposal for a working method and course of action.

Two major competitive events have marked the beginning of my presidency: the World Youth Championships, which took place in Salomaggiore from 11 to 17 July 2025 and were a huge success. And, of course, the World Open Championships, which started yesterday morning here in Herning. Eric Laurant and his team will report on these two events in detail.

We have launched the first EBridge Cup for early September in collaboration with Group 52, which brings together the Funbridge and BBO platforms. This event will be a global test of what we can achieve in terms of online championships against robots. We will come back to this in more detail tomorrow.

For the first time, we will be broadcasting the World Championships in Herning on Twitch TV. We will broadcast the semi-finals and final of the Bermuda Bowl on all segments with top-level commentators working in pairs throughout the day.

From the start of the championships, there will also be a video summarising the day's events, which will be broadcast on our website and on social media.

The elections took place on 16 May, four months ago now, and as I promised, we immediately started working on development.

We will present a number of actions and results today following yesterday afternoon's youth and development committee meeting.

I have tried to prepare some figures on the evolution of the number of licence holders in the different areas. I will present them to you in detail in a moment. The conclusion is clear: we have lost a lot of members over the last five years, with a few exceptions, but unfortunately these are too few and far between in the overall picture.

My goal is to work with you on Quick Wins to demonstrate that yes, we can reverse the trends and start again on a solid foundation for development in almost all WBF NBO'S.

As I have often explained, this is of course a problem of strategic planning, priority setting and willpower.

The average age of our licence holders is between 72 and 74, and we are seeing a trend where they are ageing by about six months every year. A quick calculation shows that in order to return to growth, we need to gain **10% new licence holders in each federation every year. 10% new members is the magic number to remember!**

This goal may seem enormous, but it is perfectly achievable if we put the resources into it and decide to do it.

Of course, not all federations will undertake the same action plan depending on their history, size and available resources.

Let's always remember that it is better to undertake a single development initiative and do it well than to try to do several and not see them through to the end.

The WBF must become a meeting point between the NBOs, the zones and the various players that make it up, not only for the high level, which it already does very well, but also for the entire world of bridge.

As you will see, we will make ourselves available to the NBOs and zones and help them in their development activities with tools, brainpower and even financial resources if justified.

This enormous challenge of changing the direction of our ship and achieving a 10% renewal of our licence holders on a global basis will have to take two major factors into account:

- The bridge of the future will be half online and half face-to-face, and let's not kid ourselves: this requires us to have a genuine strategic plan on this subject, from initiation to competition.
- Communication will be key to our existence: we are currently non-existent or virtually non-existent on social media, so we will need to find ways to emerge and become more and more visible. During this congress, I will present the example of chess, which has successfully boosted its communication and gained extraordinary visibility.

We will, of course, have to convince people again and again and overcome all obstacles, in particular the aversion to change felt by some and the difficulty of questioning oneself. It is a difficult but exciting path, as I have often said.

Feel free to join any of the projects you see over the next two days. We need your help and your energy.

Thank you in advance for your support.