



2023 CIVL PLENARY – ANNEXE 6B

CIVL PRESIDENT REPORT – COMMISSION PRESIDENTS GROUP REVIEW

I based this Commission President Group (CPG) review on my experience as a 8-year CIVL President and on some of the documents available since 1987. The oldest documents were scanned when the WAG review was done. A CPG review was not planned at the time and more CPG-related documents must exist.

STATUTES

The oldest ones that I have are from 2011.

The CPG is considered as a working group. It is defined in the Terms and definitions as “a meeting of the Presidents of the FAI Commissions to be held not less than annually”.

The FAI President chairs the CPG meetings.

The CPG

- Consider the work and matters of common interest of the various Commissions;
- Create areas of common policy on sporting matters for General Conference determination;
- Review proposed and past expenditure of FAI funds derived from air sport events;
- Present to the General Conference appropriate advice or recommendations.

The EB agenda “shall include matters referred by the CPG”.

The statutes have remained the same.

MEETINGS

1987 – A short “report on the meeting of the Group of Committee Presidents” is on the General Conference (GC) agenda.

1989 – The report presented to the GC concerns the “joint meeting of FAI Officials with the Presidents of International FAI Committees”. The minutes of this meeting show that were present 12 Commission representatives, 5 Council representatives, 1 Statute working group representative.

1990 – The report to the GC is headed “Meeting of the FAI President Group”. Air Sport Commissions have 14 representatives, the Council has 5, there are 2 invitees representing the French and Greek NACs (WAGs to be discussed).

1991, 1992 – Similar to 1990, the invitees adjusted to the current issues.

1993 – The FAI 2000 project has been launched and the first changes are reported. CASI is reduced in size, only Air Sport Commissions (ASC) are represented, NAC have an equal number of representatives, “the CPG remains part of the FAI structure.”

1993 to 2001 – The Records of Decisions are similar to 1990–1992. The CPG meets once a year just before the GC, Except in 2000 – two meetings – as the 2001 Spanish WAGs are around the corner.

2002 to 2005 – Two meetings yearly. We have mostly agendas and two reports that show that FAI representatives are few (President, Secretary General).

2006 to 2019 – The CPG doesn't meet anymore as such. The CPs meet EB members twice yearly in what is now called "Meeting of the FAI Air Sport Commission Presidents with the FAI Executive Board", once around May, once just before the GC. Full attendance of the Executive Board (EB), invitees of the EB as needed. The brief records of discussions becomes extensive minutes. Some CPs meet the evening before the meeting to discuss the agenda item. Always nice to share beer-time but not very productive.

ATMOSPHERE

- Before 2019.

From 2006 and on, the CPG is not run according to the statutes.

Convocation and agenda are sent by the secretariat. CPs can submit any subject but seldom do. Minutes are done by the secretariat. A few meetings don't have any minutes, the secretariat being too busy (I guess) to write and publish them.

During the meetings of the 2015–2019 period, the CPs are facing the EB members and secretariat and mostly listen to what they have to say. The mood can be heavy, stressful. The interpretation of some EB members and FAI President is that the EB has the ultimate sporting power and ASCs have to follow the EB orders. This can be felt during the discussions. This interpretation materialises in some sport-related decisions that go against the will of the CIVL.

- 2019 and 2020.

The CPG meets the EB twice yearly, as usual. The issues are so many and the mood is so bad that the CPs create a working platform on Freedcamp because they don't trust the confidentiality of the FAI Basecamp they have access to. We use Freedcamp extensively: 1,900+ messages for some 60 discussions. There is a sense of unity amongst the CPs.

In October 2020, FAI President Bob Henderson organises the first ever CPG meeting according to the statutes: him chairing, only the CPs attending. The Secretary General attends to brief on finances then withdraws. The mood is totally different. "In closing the President thanked the CPs for the engaged and positive discussions. He summarised the main points and asked that they advise, by email, whether there should be a CPG meeting with the full EB prior to the GC." None is asked for.

- December 2020 and on.

At the 2020 General Conference, David Monk is elected FAI President. One of his aims is to run the FAI according to its statutes. This includes the CPG meetings.

From December 2020 to this day, CPG meetings take part monthly. The attendance is strictly CPs and David as Chair. The agenda and minutes are circulated and finalised together. The atmosphere is occasionally tense, but there is a sense that we are all working for a better FAI.

WHAT HAPPENED? 2018–2020

The 2018–2020 One-FAI/Refreshing-FAI project underlined the lack of communication between the EB and the ASCs and the frustration of the ASCs when they were not involved in the decision process concerning sporting matters.

The final report of the working group to the 2020 GC states that the WG "reached consensus

that ASCs should be involved in decision-making on sporting matters”.

The FAI President contributed just before the 2020 GC.

He underlined the need for a “holistic review of the organisation to ensure (its) success for the next 20 years” and proposed the creation of a new working group leading the way forward.

He underlined “that the roles and responsibilities of the CPG (should) be amended to provide for a more governance-based involvement with the FAI President and the Executive Board, especially in relation to all strategic planning and decisions involved sporting matters.” He proposed some statutory changes to the CPG role.

The CPs refused the proposals. They considered that the working group composition was not satisfactory and that the statutes changes still left to the EB the real power in sporting matters decisions.

The thick One-FAI/Refreshing-FAI file and the final exchanges between the FAI President and the CPs are very interesting. They certainly are good references for whoever wants to move the FAI forward.

The One-FAI/Refreshing-FAI project was forgotten and replaced by the will to run the CPG according to the statutes.

WHAT HAPPENED? 2021–2022

The CPG ran according to the statutes was certainly a better experience than the CPs/EB meetings, but it was not sufficient. The ASCs were still left without real power concerning EB decisions that concerned them. Worst, they were sometimes not even consulted. Some examples...

- Exclusion of the FAI Recognised Organisation.

Some ASCs had long-standing working relation with them. The EB denounced the Memorandum of Understanding that the FAI had with some of them without forewarning the Organisation concerned, without consultation of the ASCs concerned.

- By-laws defining the date for the ASCs plenaries.

The CPG was not consulted nor given explanations. The EB was told that the CPs were individually consulted and that they all agreed. In fact, some of them did not agree.

The by-laws were changed and published without the CPG being forewarned.

When the CPG discussed and it was suggested that the by-laws be reversed. The CPG was not heard.

- Statutes proposal taking away from the Vice-Presidents the responsibility to vote on the FAI General awards nominations.

It was said that it was not a CPG matter, but all CPs are Vice-Presidents so this could have been discussed efficiently in CPG meetings. The proposal was not discussed before it was published, neither with the CPG nor with the Vice-Presidents.

When some CPs requested that the proposal be withdrawn, they were not heard.

- Media and Social Media Policy.

The document was never shared with the CPG before it was published and the CPs asked to distribute it widely. CIVL made extensive comments and proposals. They were discussed in a CPG meeting and got some support. The CIVL document was sent to the FAI President and Secretary General well before the Policy date of implementation. It was never circulated within the EB. The document remained unchanged. It was stated that the CIVL contribution “will be considered when the review period is due”.

WHAT IS THE CPG VALUE?

As we have been functioning, in the light of the four examples above, not much. Meeting every month allows raising concerns and discussing issues, but the CPG is just a working group, brought into play or not, with no authority; but the CPs still have no control on EB decisions that concern them directly and, sometimes, they are not even consulted.

All exchanges with the EB, one way or the other, go through the FAI President. We never know what is reported, we never know what is discussed and how, we never know what the EB really think except through the brief edited minutes of the EB meetings that come to us at the earliest one month after the meeting.

FAI is split. There are a lot of discussion groups, but there is no direct communication with all parties and not even a common project. The CPG is just one of these groups without much influence.

The CPG has never used its power to formally refer matters to the EB and to “present to the General Conference appropriate advice or recommendations”. It includes whatever issues and proposed solutions. Maybe it’s time to do it.

Still, it is not sufficient. Sporting issues happens all the time and the General Conference meets only once a year. Also, the Commissions’ voting power at the General Conference is very limited: only 10% or so, and 0% on statutory matters.

By and large the current CPG is populated by experienced, clever and capable people who know where the interest of their discipline lies. Why share the head of the table with other key FAI officers is seen as a burden rather than an asset?

I believe that it is time – again – to raise the FAI decision structure as a core governance issue. This topic should receive dedicated attention within a clear schedule. An agreed concept of process and protocol with the people that run the sport can only make the FAI better.