

Dear EAP members,
Dear candidates,
Dear friends.

Here we are again at our annual convention.
Welcome to everybody.

It is my great pleasure to be here in Celle Ligure, with my good old friend Giorgio, in this place where we have many common memories, about the history of the circuit.

Giorgio welcomed me to his home in February 1992, when we decided to meet together for the indoor European championships in Genova. Josep was also already there.

Your great friend, our common friend GianMario, who is now watching us from up there, had the good idea, the evening just after our very first founding circuit of the EAP, to go to his printing shop to make us a banner with the writing "Europe Athlétisme Promotion", a name that our first President Noël Levêque had proposed. And presto, this bright red banner, he put it up on the stand we had. I still don't understand how we could have obtained this stand. But certainly that was the fruit of Giorgio's famous miracolistica.

We are reunited here again, but with white hair and glasses, for a fresh start that sees the creation of an official association, and no longer just a group of visionaries and militant idealists that we are.

It is indeed, a special place here, surrounded by a special and... miraculous friend.

We have gone through technological revolutions, which have changed the way we interact with the world and thanks to which we have been able to modify and simplify the way we manage our meetings. Everything is now contained in this diabolical object that is the smartphone.

We went through a pandemic, who would have imagined it ? We are even witnessing a war in a country which was one of the early members of the EAP, Odessa.

But it's true that the idea we had of allowing athletes to have a privileged place in a meeting abroad was as simple as it was brilliant. This idea is not only still relevant, but it is our most precious asset.

And if we are here, again and again, it is because we believe in it and we must defend it. Allowing our athletes to participate in an international meeting, being part of a circuit that we wanted to own, is our most precious asset, a right that we claim and that we must defend.

Today, World Athletics needs to find a place for itself among other sports, and has therefore adapted to certain marketing rules. Monetization is part of a vocabulary that was not that of the 90s.

World Athletics is structured and closed around rules that are sometimes astonishing and which are not unanimously accepted.

Its main showcase, after the major championships and the Olympic Games, are the big meetings of the Diamond League where attractive formats have been introduced for spectators and the media, such as the "final three" in horizontal jumps and throws. In major championships the top 12 athletes in the ranking no longer need to pass the elimination rounds.

The 12 best athletes in the ranking. let's talk about the ranking!

This system, which was just been announced a few days before our Convention in Valence in 2018, has changed our sport, and continues to do so. And this concerns us directly.

Today, except for the very best athletes in the world, the others, and in large part those who attend our meetings, no longer qualify thanks to their performance, but thanks to the ranking system. Yes, and then will you tell me?

So this has a direct impact because the ranking is now obtained exclusively in labeled meetings, those that World Athletics defines as such. These meetings are worth a certain number of points, depending on their level (DL, World Continental Tour Gold, Silver, Bronze and Challenger meetings).

Apart from that, few points are awarded and needless to say that athletes of a certain level can no longer afford to come and run a 10"30 which would not earn them enough points to be part of the of theranking.

The good athletes who made the attraction of our meetings, which the local media could boast of highlighting, those who attracted so many of our athletes and who left the meeting able to say "I ran with the European finalist", these athletes there will disappear from our meetings.

We no longer have, as organizers, the frequent question "who are the participants in the 400m hurdles", but today the only question is "what is the category of your meeting?". The answer is simple: our meetings are almost all category F !

With the exception of three of our meetings which in 2023 will be labeled (Loughborough and Celle Ligure will be "Challenger", therefore category D and Geneva will be "Bronze", therefore category C), all the others will have to content themselves with a secondary role, sadly marginal because penalizing both for the athletes and frustrating for us organizers.

The evolution of the ranking system means that beyond the "D" categories, no meeting will no longer be recognized as valid to qualify athletes. The noose is therefore tightening around the meetings labeled World Continental Tour and, of course, the Diamond Leagues.

Uselessness... the death of EAP??

Should we throw away our values and our principles, our structure, our own circuit concept, our quality program of meetings because they are now useless?

Have our visions, our ideals also taken on wrinkles and white hair?

No, I don't believe that for a second.

The EAP has a structure, quality criteria and a role, a mission!

We have a weight, we prepare, we have always prepared the athletes of tomorrow. We give them a qualitative competition framework, we train them at the highest level.

All the great European athletes have passed through us, they have qualified for European and world championships or for the Olympic Games.

Each of you can tell great stories, immense emotions that the tears of joy of the athletes were shed by thanking us for having made such a competition available to them.

This role, this springboard that we are, this mission that we have and all the efforts that we put in place, together, so that our circuit is a real platform of choice for these athletes, we must promote it.

But we have to fill gaps, sometimes significant, a certain laxity, a carelessness that is not due to a lack of passion, but most often a lack of means. These were reduced a few years ago, and have been amplified with the pandemic and now the consequences linked to the war in Ukraine.

We have to put things in order. We have everything in place and we also have tools available to members, so that our meetings are representative of each other. EAP is a trademark, a reputation, a value.

I want to negotiate and claim from European Athletics an entry fee for our meetings in the National and International categories so that we can benefit from a category D, at the same level as the Challengers.

The EAP must be able to continue to play its role and remain attractive to everyone. Being part of the EAP also means being recognized as quality meetings.

This Convention of Celle Ligure is that of official recognition as an associative structure and is the one that recompacks us around our values and our regulations.

Finally, this congress will mark the start of negotiations for recognition as a "meeting category".

Athletics needs our meetings.

That's why we keep improving and working together.

Thank you and good convention to all!

Pablo Cassina
EAP President