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Annual Meeting of the ECU Arbiters' Council in Budva, Montenegro

The annual meeting of the ECU Arbiters' Council was organised in Budva, Montenegro, on Friday, November 17th, as part of the ECU General Assembly 2023. All members of the Council were present, either physically or online, and various guests attended and participated in the discussion. As an introduction, Geert Bailleul, Chairman of the Council, presented the composition of the Council as it was decided one year ago. He continued with a brief, but comprehensive, presentation of the Council's activities and Goals for the future.

The next topic on the agenda was the annual overview of appointments in European events. In 2023, 137 arbiters have been appointed (77 IAs, 31 FAs and 29 NAs) to fill 164 positions (some colleagues have been appointed more than once). The male/female ratio 113/51 and the local/foreigners ratio 82/82. Unfortunately, there have been cases where the organisers sent us the arbiters' lists very late for the Council to suggest any changes, thus, the requirements for the level/titles/category have not always been fulfilled.

Moving on to the arbiters' evaluation that is done by the Chief Arbiter after an event has been completed, we value the reports that are being submitted and are exploring ways to make them more concrete and precise. Generic comments that everything went smoothly and all arbiters performed at a top level are not very helpful and, in a few cases, may not reflect the conditions of an event. We are asking the CAs to be specific about the arbiters' skills and abilities and suggest ways to improve in an instructive way.

Regarding the Call of Interest for 2023, statistics were provided, such as 37 arbiters invited and 20 among them from 13 federations accepting the appointment. The male/female ratio was 11/9 and it is worth noting that 4 colleagues had never before officiated in a European or World event. These statistics reflect radical changes that were made this year to enhance presence of female arbiters and give opportunities to arbiters who have never before been appointed in European/ World events.

The possibility to increase the percentage of arbiters that the ECU AC can appoint in each event was also discussed (currently it is 20%) and will be presented to the General Assembly in the future.

The topic that was more broadly discussed was handling harassment complaints in a tournament. In the past couple of years, there has been an increased number of reports of alleged harassment and violation of human integrity in events among people in any kind of role. This raises the question of how to handle such reports, who is the most appropriate person to do it (usually the Chief Arbiter is the recipient of the report, but the Tournament Director is responsible of dealing with matters non-strictly related to chess), what should the CA do, how should officials behave during the event. The factors to take into consideration were not exhausted, as the topic is quite complicated and delicate. Especially in the era of social media, officials and players need to be careful about what they write publicly, comment or, in general, how they express themselves. As Council, we plan to organise seminars in the future to discuss what can be perceived as inappropriate behaviour during an event and how arbiters should act if they are recipients of such complaints.

The attendees participated actively in the discussion of the various topics, gave useful feedback on the Council's activities and suggested ways for further improvement.

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The ECU Arbiters Council publishes monthly articles in the ECU Magazine about its activities.

Detailed information can be found on the official website: <https://arbiters.europechess.org>