

President's report 2023 - A rollercoaster!

Current and past EJs

It is the EJC again! This year, again, it is a reason to be grateful. Getting an EJC in 2023 off the ground has been a rollercoaster for everyone involved.

When Ireland had to cancel in April, it seemed that we may not have an **EJC in 2023**. Thankfully, the juggling community has shown its resilience once again: the **Lublin team** - organisers of the 35th and 40th editions of the EJC in 2012 and 2017 - stepped forward to also organise the 45th EJC! Jakub and Joanna, Festival Representatives for 2012 and 2017, approached the board and said they could do it. Their conditions were great: the site was available, the city was supportive, and the team brought a lot of experience. It could have hardly been better. Nonetheless, to be willing to organise an EJC in less than three months, an event that is normally organised over more than two years, is incredibly courageous. Dear Polish team, from all of us at the European Juggling Association, a sincere and heartfelt, THANK YOU, DZIĘKUJE, MERCI, DANKE!

After France had to cancel due to issues with their site last year (see last year's report), **Team Ireland** (initially led by Blue Hanley, Des Johnston, and Paul Mulrennan, and later joined by many more) took on the challenge, which they had been preparing for since 2018. They poured a lot of work into it, facing many unforeseen issues outside their control, including effects from the war in Ukraine. When it all looked like it was finally coming together, in April 2023, insurance issues arose¹ and everything collapsed at the last minute. Five years of thinking and preparation and anticipation for the Irish team were quashed. Dear Ireland, thank you for your dedication and all the work you've put in!

Wrapping up the reporting on EJs over the last year, the **44th EJC 2022** - the first EJC since the pandemic - welcomed nearly 2.500 jugglers to Tres Cantos, Spain, and was able to generate a small surplus of ~4.600€! Half of this has stayed with the team, and half has gone to future EJs via the European Juggling Association. Thank you, dear Spanish team, for making this happen!

¹ See two press articles: [Beyoncé skipping Ireland and world's biggest juggling convention pulled over sky-high insurance costs](#) and [World's biggest juggling event finds cheaper insurance in Poland after quitting Ireland due to high premium costs](#)



Future EJs - Ovar and EJC bids

When we leave Lublin this year, we will be looking forward to going to the **46th EJC 2023 in Ovar** from 27 July to 4 August 2024. Thank you to Nuno and his team for the open communication and collaboration!

For a **47th EJC in 2025**, we had two teams interested initially. One of them decided to postpone their application, but only one moved forward to selection: the Dutch team has presented a great bid to the board, and will make its bid to the General Assembly in Lublin. Good luck, dear Dutch!

Next year, we would like to elect **EJC teams for both 2026 and 2027**, to give organisers a longer planning horizon again, to improve experience sharing, and to facilitate collaboration between more EJC teams. If you are interested in running an EJC, please do get in touch with us at info@eja.net!

Interesting discussions kicked off in late 2022, when an Israeli team approached the European Juggling Association about hosting an **EJC in Israel**. Despite the potential sensitivities, the conversations were always constructive, even if opinion differed. Many arguments for and against were exchanged within the board as well as between the board and the applicant team, including but not limited to:

- The potential for an EJC to connect people across borders and open up dialogue
- Location and the (technically undefined) geographical mandate of the 'European Juggling Convention' (including environmental/travel considerations, and geopolitical considerations that make Israel partake in many in other sporting events that have 'European' in their names)
- Whether an EJC in a country could be construed as endorsing the political positions or actions of that country's government
- What the board's role in pre-selecting bids for the General Assembly is

As President, I requested that any final decision on whether we would allow the Israeli team to submit a bid at the General Assembly should be decided by a two-thirds majority, in order to not create bitterness because one or two people swayed the decision either way. If a two-thirds majority couldn't be met, the conversation would continue next year (and the Israeli team said they would have the stamina). The resulting vote on whether to let the team go to the General Assembly was split exactly evenly. We will continue the conversation.



Working in the background

Working in the background has also not been easy given all this uncertainty; many plans we made to increase knowledge sharing between teams were thwarted. For example, a tradition we intend to establish is to meet ~6 months before the EJC on site with former, current and future EJC organisers, (a) to help the team with this year's event and (b) to share experience between past, present and future. For obvious reasons, this was not possible this year.

However, there were also a lot of wins. As a result of the work before and during the EJC 2022, many more people got involved in volunteering with the European Juggling Association, either as board members or as volunteers offering their specific skills. Some things that we have been able to do thanks to them:

- Regular Community Big Tops; virtual meetings for anyone interested to speak about things related to the EJC and/or European Juggling Association
- Establish subgroups on communications, tech, governance, and funding/finance
- Communicate more regularly through newsletters and social media in a more visually coherent way
- EJCs are happening despite difficult circumstances, and the relationship between the EJC teams and the European Juggling Association is positive.
- We have some additional income through the voluntary EJA contribution in the preregistration system (thank you to everyone who has contributed!).

If you look at our strategy below, you will see that with all of this, we have made some progress towards our goals. You will also see that there is more to do. We can still share our knowledge and experience better. Our website needs an overhaul. We are still relying heavily on surplus from the EJC events to sustain the running cost of the organisation. We have not yet made the progress in organisational structure that we have hoped for. If you would like to make a difference and help us

make further progress, join this lovely team! Let's work together to build for the future of the European Juggling Association and EJC!

Jonas Fathy
President





Acknowledgments

Personal challenges have made it difficult for me to drive things. I feel deep gratitude for having a wonderful executive team - **Alejandro, Bubba, Eileen, Gamze, Linde, Sweets** - that picked up the slack! Sweets especially deserves a double shout out for having spanned our executive committee, the Irish EJC's team, and running the EJA's side of preregistration for Poland! Our communications team around **Cat** and **Marta** has also done an incredible job this year, making sure that we communicate regularly and timely - thank you!

And of course, there are all the **board members** who have been so active during the year and a source of knowledge, support, and supportive challenge - **Anton, Ben, Blue, Giulia, Guy, Lena, Maria, Melissa, Miark, Momo, Paul, Philip, Simon, Sonja, and Tobi** (in addition to some of those already mentioned) and many more.

We're really grateful for all your involvement, and hope that we can keep the momentum or even build a bit more. A big thank you also needs to go, again(!), to **Andi Nitsche** from sixhop.net, who has been running our IT infrastructure for years, in a largely voluntary capacity. Thank you for your endurance!



Our current strategy on two pages

Who we are

We believe in the power of juggling and performing arts to connect people across borders and differences, creating beautiful and joyful moments together. We enable others to organise joyful events, first and foremost the European Juggling Convention.

In our work, these things are important to us:

Connection: We bring people together for meaningful exchanges.

Diversity: We value differences and the challenges they bring because they make us better.

Participation: We actively enable others to participate in our work and create their own work.

Joy: We create joyful moments.

Our ambitions...

...for the difference we make.

Events we support continue to bring joy, and to a wider variety of people: Not only do EJC's survive the pandemic, but we also support other events, especially in less affluent places. More people from a wider variety of countries know about the European Juggling Association and experience the joy of juggling events it supports.

...for our organisation.

We are an organisation that delivers on its promises: When we decide to start a project, we either complete it or consciously choose not to for a good reason. Our knowledge and resources are accessible in a way that is useful for those accessing them. We are financially healthy and have enough resources to support our impact ambition sustainably.



Our strategic goals for 2023

0) Recruit and support EJC teams

We will continue to recruit and support current and future EJC teams.

1) Create an organisational structure that structurally independent (of the EJC, for the benefit of the continuity of the EJC)

We will build a structure that remains functional and stable even if the EJC is under threat, in order to provide stability and support to the EJC in the long-run.

2) Create independent income streams

We will build income streams other than surplus from EJCs. This will further increase its stability and ability to support EJCs.

3) Improve the visibility and attractiveness of the EJA

We will become more visible and attractive for the community, to generate more resources for EJCs.

4) Improve internal systems and processes

We will improve its internal practices and processes, being more efficient and reducing frustration for its people.

5) Make the EJA's knowledge & information more accessible to the public and potential future EJC teams

We will create and collate resources that make the organisation of juggling events (and specifically the EJC) easier and more attractive.