



30th of December 2022

Dear members,
Dear friends,

Another year has come to an end, and the feeling that we still are in a post-Covid difficult situation is still dominant.

Fortunately, many countries now have the situation under control and the restrictions have been lifted; however, we know that this is not the case to all countries, so we hope that soon we all, without exceptions, can put Covid behind us.

Unfortunately, 2022 brought another very difficult challenge – the Ukraine war –, which has had a very strong impact to many of us. Our wish and hope for 2023 is that this long period of instability and insecurity can come to an end.

Despite this situation, we continue to bring out the possible from the impossible. We see many competitions everywhere, the number of starters is increasing week by week and happily, many officials are again busy and traveling across national borders.

Nevertheless, unity is more important than ever. We started now to see a greater proximity and more joining efforts with the other stakeholder clubs aiming to achieve the best results in the sport. Not only in relation to each other but also in relation to the FEI. Many other interested partners like the EEF have announced their arrival in the “arena”. We look forward to a higher development of cooperation with the new Chair (Sissy Max-Theurer), and the other officials of the EEF dressage working group.

This year there has been a lot of debate about rule changes and especially changes in officials’ status (from Stars to Levels). At the FEI General Assembly in South Africa it ended with a compromise, in order to harmonize FEIs systems, and still acknowledging the dressage officials status. It was a great joint venture by all the stakeholder clubs, but it should not be necessary to join forces as a united block against the FEI. FEI must be more of a unifying organism, and more service-oriented towards its stakeholders. We (IDOC/and the other Clubs) have the same goals as the FEI and work under the same Code of Conduct and rules, therefore it’s important that our feedback is valued and supported on a daily basis.

IDOC now has a new MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with FEI, with improvement and acknowledgements in the direction of a higher level of cooperation, which we hope and believe that this will be the key ingredient to success in 2023.

Throughout the year IDOC has been very active and has organized several seminars and educational opportunities for the Officials worldwide. Once again, I would like to take the chance to thank all the people that have made it possible. It is a lot of work, but so important. I would also like to thank the FEI Education Department, Course Directors and BlackHorseOne for their commitment and continuous support of our ideas. BlackHorseOne has been far-sighted and has developed solutions for improving Dressage branding and the results software.

In our regions we have had a lot of activity, many officials are deeply involved in their national federations and spend a lot of time helping and trying to develop new ideas and competitions.

One thing has not changed, and that is some of the outer world's view and some criticism of the sport. There are many critical voices, and these should not be discarded and overlooked.

We must not end up in a situation where we do not find the courage to defend our traditions and sport. Unfortunately, the situation is often polarized, and many are unwilling to participate in a conflicting discussion or other more radical "reprimands" by internet trolls. This is not only in dressage, but a more generalized tendency in today's world (read: the internet). We tend to isolate in smaller groups without having to deal with the outside world. But we should not be afraid, we have nothing to hide. In dressage we strive for perfection or "excellency" - but most horse-people also know, that "excellent" only strikes occasionally.... or at the best once in a lifetime (at least very seldom!) But we keep training and try to improve all the time.

The welfare of the horse must always be paramount, and we must all act like guardians in that respect. We can certainly improve in some areas, and we must always seek to reward good harmony between horse and rider. But the concept of welfare, however, must not end up as a dead-end and act as a stumbling block in discussions in relation to sport progress.

Sometimes one must look back/forward/across the room to find new ways and solutions. We must stay open. Our sport is always described as being conservative: that can be good in a way that we care about our proud traditions and all the knowledge it brings with it, but it can also be conservative in a more negative way: not willing to change or see new possibilities.

The role of IDOC is also taking the lead and help in creating new alliances and understandings that together will ensure an even better future for the sport.

Officials must at any time be educated and supported by the FEI in order to be respected players in the sport.

IDOCs goal is to become the most important stakeholder club in the FEI dressage family. Our ambition is to be broadly represented, at all levels, with as many members as possible. We will continue our efforts in the education and intend to involve more and new Officials candidates.

To close, I have one more important thing to say: Thank you for joining the club. Thank you to our board members. Congratulations to the new elected board - the coming year will be exciting.

Thank you to the outgoing members; You have done a fantastic job; all IDOC members are truly grateful and I wish you the best of luck for the future. Finally, and not least, thank you Olivier (Smeets) for many years of hard work as our Secretary. You have been a rock and great support not only for me but for all members. I am sure many of our members have been helped and correctly guided by you, as a true gentleman, good friend and colleague.

Thank you.

I wish you all a peaceful, happy and prosperous New Year 2023.

Hans Christian Matthiesen
President, IDOC