

“I feel a strong motivation”

On November 7th, 2009, Georges Guelzec (FRA) was elected President of the UEG with 24 votes; the former president, Dimitrios Dimitropoulos (GRE), obtained 22 votes. On January 23rd, 2010 the official transmission of authority from the former to the new UEG authorities will be organised in Vienna (AUT). It is time to better get to know the new President of the UEG.

Georges Guelzec, on January 23rd you will assume the Presidency of the UEG – what do you feel?

GG.: I feel a strong motivation to work with the new team, which was elected by the General Assembly in Tel Aviv. I will be a President wishing to work with a team.

During the Tel Aviv Congress, the candidates for the Presidency did not have the possibility to present their projects. What kind of strategy or sports policy do you want to develop during your presidency (2010-2013)

I would like to diversify the financial resources of the UEG which currently depend mostly on television. Furthermore, I wish to improve the quality of all UEG events.

Your electoral programme, which convinced 24 federations, includes 12 points. Which task will have your priority?

Among the priorities I would like to mention the revision of the statutes, the creation of a groupe of companies, the improvement of communication and the support of the National Federations (NF).

Unlike your predecessor, who was certainly highly involved in sports issues, you have climbed all rungs of gymnastics in France and in Europe (see portrait below). Having such a complete experience, what are you going to contribute first and foremost to European gymnastics?

I'll be very attentive to the sports projects of the eight technical committees. Consequently, it will also be important



to find the financial means for their implementation.

Does the present top level gymnastics correspond to your own perception?

Top level gymnastics is in constant evolution and has to respect the codes and the regulations of the International Federation of Gymnastics FIG. Much was

Portrait of Georges Guelzec, President of the UEG:

Born: October 22nd, 1947

Hometown: Nantes/FRA

Married, 2 children (Fabrice and Laurent), 4 grandchildren

Status: Former top level gymnast remaining faithful to his favourite sport

Sport career: 10 years member of the French team; 3 qualifications for European Championships (1969 Warsaw, 1973 Grenoble) and World Championships (1970 Ljubljana); OG 1972 in Munich.

Functions within the sport:

- 35 years as coach and head technician of his club “La Nantaise”
- Coach of many gymnasts that

competed in OG and of juniors of international level.

- National, international and intercontinental judge – has judged at several OG, ECh and WCh
- Instructor appointed by the FIG for the international brevet courses

Functions within the institutions:

- Vice-President of the NF FRA since 1992
- Member of the MTC/UEG from 1993 to 2002
- UEG Vice-President since 2003 charged with sports matters
- Competition director at many major events (European, Internationaux de France)
- UEG President since 2010

Professional functions:

- Director of the “Palais des Sports” until 2006 and head of the sports department of the city of Nantes (90 sport halls, 115 employees)

As such, instructor at a regional and national level in the areas of security during major events, civil, criminal and administrative responsibility, statutory aspects of organizations, legal precedents etc.

Hobbies:

- Walks on the Breton and the Vendée's coasts – Theater – Cinema (too seldom), but the main hobby remains gymnastics ...

achieved with regard to the improvement of the apparatus, e.g. the vaulting table, as well as to the technical competence of the coaches. I would like to see gymnastics more orientated towards the artistic side and the perfection of the movements as well as a better enhancement of the all-round gymnasts.

Is it not true that the UEG has, in some ways, its hands tied as gymnastics is mainly managed, on the technical level, by the FIG (code of points, technical regulations)?

The composition of movements as well as the technical regulations are certainly under the control of the FIG. The UEG however, like the other Continental Unions, is free to create new competitions and/or competition formats.

In this context, how do you assess the relation to the FIG as you will be part of its Executive Committee as President of the European Union of Gymnastics?

I have excellent relations with the FIG President, Bruno Grandi, as well as with many other members of the Executive Committee, which I knew as gymnast, coach, judge or director. The FIG and the UEG must be complementary. The continents must have more important development objectives as the FIG, especially with regard to juniors.



2012 will be the year of the London OG. In Beijing, Europe was a bit behind the Asians, in particular. Can we expect a reversal of this situation?

I hope so – I remain very confident. Moreover, I will make all possible support available to the NF so that they can realise their best performances (material for the training centres etc.)

What about the non-Olympic disciplines (ACRO, AER, TUM etc.) – can/must the UEG maintain its current programme?

The technical committees concerned have already highly improved their discipline. However, there is still a lot of work to do in the areas of quality, development and competition formats.

The UEG organises every two years a EUROGYM Youth Festival and the GOLDEN AGE GYM FESTIVAL (for persons of 50+). Can the UEG do more in the field of Gymnastics for All?

Gymnastics for All (GfA) has progressed well in both directions – young gymnasts and the older ones (50+). Now it would be appropriate to meet with the FIG in order to coordinate the activities in the field of GfA, as many of these activities take place in Europe.

You suggested the organisation of two internal UEG seminars (2005 and 2007). Could certain projects be realised and which ones can/must still be realised?

These two seminars allowed the Executive Committee (EC) to take several decisions. However, after the 2007 seminar some doubts remained and some decisions are still outstanding. It is necessary to resume certain projects or to reactivate some topics and to work again on the future of the UEG. This could for instance be done with a 3rd UEG seminar.

As vice-president you actively took part in UEG events, had always excellent relations with the media and understood their needs. As UEG President, what do you intend to do to strengthen this sector?

Our sport is difficult to understand, for



the media as well as for the spectators. It is important to improve the means of communication by making funds available for the events and competitions. I see two possible ways: to give targeted information to the spectators in the hall and the television-viewers. The second way concerns TV.

During the OG, gymnastics is always very present on television. The European Championships in the Olympic disciplines MAG, WAG and RG are also popular, probably because of the format and the quality of the UEG events. But it is certainly possible to do better? How?

Admittedly, it becomes increasingly difficult to convince the TV channels to broadcast gymnastics, in particular live. I believe that the UEG should perhaps multiply or diversify its contracts. The public channels, members of EBU with which the UEG has a contract, reduce their commitment. Consequently, the UEG must turn towards privatisation with commercial TV wishing to broadcast gymnastics. This will probably not be done tomorrow, but certainly the day after tomorrow.

So far, UEG Championships have always been allocated to NF. Would it be possi-

ble to consider a more direct cooperation with cities interested in the organisation of international sport events?

Of course we can consider to cooperate more closely with cities, but always through the NF as a direct contact with the cities could have a destabilising effect on our NF, as a recent example has proven.

On the other hand, in case of a non-compliance of contractual terms the UEG has no authority on a city, whereas it can exercise a certain pressure on its NF. In some specific cases however, we could consider modifying our contracts in view of a tripartite agreement (UEG-NF-City).

Money remains the key – also and above all in gymnastics. Your programme mentions interesting and innovative ideas in the field of partnership.

In order to realise certain projects we absolutely have to diversify our revenues and reduce expenses. The creation of a group of companies could be a solution. It would be no sponsoring but a partnership with the UEG. I think of international companies (airlines, cars or others) which could provide their support reducing the expenses of the organisers by providing flight tickets, cars etc. Another idea is the cooperation with companies in order to help gymnasts join the professional live. Other ideas are still to be examined.



G. Gulzec and Malin Eggertz-Forsmark, 1st vice-president

Let's change a bit the direction: Michel Platini, your compatriot, chairs the UEFA (European Union of football associations). Do you know him personally? Could you imagine to meet and discuss common points between Presidents of European Football and Gymnastics?

No, I don't know him, but as a matter of fact I would like to meet him and to discuss different problems which are likely to be the same. But of course there are many differences between gymnastics and football...

Do you have a particular wish at the beginning of this year and of your presidency?

I wish that all members of the EC and of the UEG authorities are as motivated as I am and that the community of European Gymnastics can help its 47 national federations. Considering the recent elections in Tel Aviv I am confident. And finally a more traditional wish: GOOD HEALTH TO EVERYONE.

*Interview: by Danielle Duchoud/UEG
Photos: UEG*