



Hungarian Equestrian Federation  
President

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## OPEN LETTER

**To the attention of Mr Károly Fugli, Chairman of the Driving Technical Committee of the International Federation for Equestrian Sports (FEI)**

Dear Mr Chairman,

Due to the happenings of the FEI World Driving Championships for Pairs, 2017 held in Lipica (Slovenia) and several other measures of the FEI Driving Technical Committee impeding the development of our discipline forced me to decide on calling your attention and the attention of other decision makers – in anticipation of evolution – to the publicly known discrepancies of driving.

The respect and love towards horses and driving ingrained in me as of my early childhood, and it has just grown even stronger since then. I always orderly respected the standpoints and decisions of the judges. However, due to the past years' serial inequitable decisions I believe I have to break silence.

**I have to speak out what all of us know but only a few dared to state publicly until now.**

As a twelve-time world champion in driving and as the President of the Hungarian Equestrian Federation I just can not hold my peace when infringements – you might say – **outrages** serially and regularly committed against our beloved sport by the preparers and at the same time executors of the rules and regulations are hitting our discipline.

Already in the ancient times it was realized and professed that **powers** can operate independently and impartially only if they have been **separated**. The works of **Aristotle** and later **Montesquieu** in this respect are considered as a basic democratic constitutional principle.

Also for the driving legislatures all this practically denotes – or should denote – the principle that **legislative, executive and judiciary powers should not be merged, and they have to (should) operate separately and independently from one another. In your practice these are completely interlocked, which is a source of severe failures.**

**It is publicly known that Driving Rules and other regulations in our discipline are prepared by the FEI Driving Technical Committee based on the opinion of the majority of judges who are also members of the international management board of driving at the same time.**

The consequence of all these – that is often experienced in practice – is that the judges elaborate and then apply the rules and regulations according to their own will, conception and interest.

Certain judges understand and apply the regulations that are elaborated by them as they wish or as the actual lobbyist interests dictate it. They can do it since **there is no such control or reporting forum** where judges would be accountable or challenged. Why would it be otherwise when establishing these kinds of rules and accountability are against the interests of several people... Based on all these our discipline is more and more about the judges and not about the sport itself.

Have we ever experienced that **a judge would be called by anyone to account** for making a flagrantly bad decision and an evidently serious mistake? In a self-respecting sport discipline, the judges are responsible for their decisions, and if they take unprofessional or derogatory actions, they will be accounted for it, and it may even have the consequence of revocation! The concept of this jury responsibility is not known and not applied within driving.

I do not deny that the final cause of writing my letter was what happened at the FEI World Driving Championships for Pairs in Lipica, where – I dare to say – due to a **wrong and unjust decision**, Zoltán LÁZÁR, nine-time world champion now, was disqualified from the competition. By this action not only the Hungarian team but also the entire field missed an honoured, successful and recognized **athlete and prospective winner**.

Until now nobody has ever raised any objection in any form against the use of ear hoods at competitions. This is just because it is **obvious for everyone that the elastic brace connecting to the noseband with ear hoods will not discommode or affect the movement of the horse's ears in any ways**. Their exclusive purpose is decoration and they serve the well-being of the horses.

The challenged elastic brace in question therefore **did not cause forced posture**, in fact, they were intended to ensure the horse's comfort.

According to first-hand information, this type of ear hood solution was used also by others and not only by Zoltán LÁZÁR at the world championship. I do not intend to name those who also used this solution, as I do not want to cause trouble to anyone; moreover, my writing is about proving that I can not see any infringement in the use of these ear hoods. We also have information on the fact that, as usual practice, many athletes used so called rigid ear protectors that were not checked by anyone. Ear plugs are also allowed, although they do not serve the horses' well-being at all.

In the case of the disqualification of Zoltán LÁZÁR the president of the ground jury made the decision without discretion (allegedly, he had no opportunity for that. If it is true, that is an even more serious issue!) He applied the most severe legal consequence, i.e. disqualification based on trumped-up reasons. On this ground only Zoltán LÁZÁR was charged with the most severe penalty, therefore in the background we rightfully assume purposefulness. He was charged by a penalty that is normally applied in the most serious cases, for example at doping misdemeanour. How are these sanctions proportionate?

Meanwhile, at the events of this year's competition season, among them at the competition in Aachen, several hundreds of horses started at the FEI European Driving Championships for Four-in-Hands and at the FEI World Driving Championships for Pairs, many of them with these specific ear hoods. Only one driver was disqualified, Zoltán LÁZÁR! Stewards, already before the competition started, would have had the opportunity to warn the athlete(s) against the use of ear hoods that were not allowed to be used according to them. They did not do it as the raid and disqualification was more devastating, and presumably this was the purpose.

How can you and the decision-making jury body explain this more than thoughtful fact?

At the same time, severe infringements, wrong decisions, more than suspicious precedents do not happen only to us. Among numerous cases the most outrageous precedent is the one that happened in Aachen, in the outstanding 'sanctuary' of the equestrian sport. Against the stipulations set out clearly in the FEI Driving Rules, the driver who was competing with a visibly lame horse was not disqualified from the competition. And even more astonishing is the

fact that finally he won the event. The most prestigious and traditional world event – after the Olympic Games – has been made desipient.

I could mention also the scoring of the Dressage Test, however, I do not do so, as most people already know what I mean.

I could speak about a lot more issues. For example about the fact that why our audience decreased in number, how Marathon changed from the most spectacular competition of our discipline to post slalom contest that is unenjoyable for the television, spectators and audience?

Or it would be good at have an answer to the question why the remuneration of the jury and officials is the largest cost element in the budget of an average competition, while the charges of the drivers, have risen up to the skies? Why are the standards of the driving events deteriorate continuously? (See Lipica, etc.) And I could still list long the burning problems of driving discipline that need a solution.

I know that the World Championship was a one-time and unrepeatable event, and the mistake of the judge, even if admitted, would not change the results. But this is not my purpose. **My aim is that it should eventually be realized that my (our) worries for the future of Driving are well-grounded!**

I wish my fact-revealing and development-intended opinion would be heard. I wish that the judges would be accountable for unprofessional decisions; competition-friendly rules would be elaborated so that driving could be again the sport of which we have once been rightfully proud. For the time being you are heading towards completely different values and standards!

Dear Mr Chairman,

Let me remind you that we organized the first European Driving Championships for Four-in-Hands in 1971. After several decades of interruption, this continental championship has been revived in 2011 based on my proposal.

Upon the honourable request of the International Equestrian Federation, Hungary has organized 11 world and 3 European championships until now. As per your personal request we have undertaken for five years to organize FEI World Driving Championships for Young Horses in Mezőhegyes, despite of the immature rules and regulations, in the spirit of pathfinding. Also at your request we had undertaken to host the FEI World Para-Driving Championships

for Single that unfortunately was cancelled in lack of interest due to the bad FEI organization.

I wrote this letter to you on behalf of that driving nation which athletes won 98 medals, out of which 43 gold medals at the world and European championships. We have therefore the necessary experience to recommend changes.

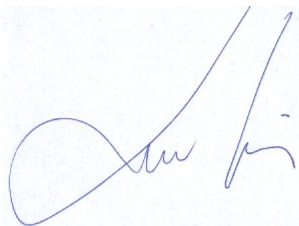
We need to make changes! We should have done it already yesterday! As the world changes around us with the speed of storm, so our discipline is in need of changes. Even in history all remarkable milestones and significant events have been anticipated by enormous turns and changes so that subsistence, development and rise could eventuate.

Hereby I state – although, for those who know me well in the driving community I do not have to prove it – that I have written this letter with the intention to improve and driven by professional commitment towards the discipline of driving.

I kindly ask you to consider all the above and be a representative of change and future.

Budapest, 6 November 2017

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Vilmos Lázár', written in a cursive style.

Vilmos LÁZÁR  
Twelve-time Driving World Champion,  
President of the Hungarian Equestrian Federation