

## ***Adjudication Team report for Amsterdam Euros 2010***

*This is a report from the CA on how I prepared for Amsterdam Euros. It by no means covers every single detail of what needs to be done, but it aspires to provide a basic outline of how we did what.*

### **1 Time line**

I started preparations more than half a year before our bid in 2009. At Cork Worlds 2010 I had assembled three DCAs whom I felt were of outstanding quality as adjudicators, and who were also widely connected to many debaters and judges in Europe. Although it is not necessary to have all your adjudication team ready before your bid, I experienced this as very useful and supportive. I was able to work with the team at the Amsterdam Open 2009 to gain experience and to show what we were able to do. After Worlds 2009, we started inviting judges. We prepared 'packages' for judges on how we would pay them. This was a balance between how much money we had, how many judges (chairs and strong wings) we needed for 50 rooms, how much a judge was 'worth' and whether that person had a stable financial income that we knew of. This process takes quite a while and you must not underestimate how much time it actually costs.

Communication with many people happens in various ways, there are people that respond immediately, people that respond after days, or weeks and people that don't even respond at all. Don't get too pissed off about it, it just sucks too much energy. As a rule, communication with others should always be granted at least a week or two. If they respond earlier, good, if they don't at least you expected it. Three weeks before Euros, I closed down all my efforts of inviting people. If late comers still applied, I checked with OrgComm whether they could put up another person, if they couldn't, I had to say no.

The judging test is another thing which takes an enormous amount of time. Start thinking about it at least three months in advance (think of the communication rule!). Think of how you'll do it – get a video from online or record one yourself. Don't get a live debate and judge it at the spot together with all the other judges. Bad idea. If there's no clear consensus in your CA team or if the debate becomes a train wreck, the purpose of the test has gone.

Throw the test online a few weeks before the start of euros, and close it a few days beforehand so you have to time to go through the dozens of them with enough time and attention. It is very useful. Do expect at least 5% of the people to hand in the test too late, and expect about 40% not to hand it in at all. Too bad for them, they will be binned for as long as necessary. Again, don't get too frustrated by what people don't do, focus on the stuff you need to get done with the means you have. Stay calm, you must. A lot of work, there is.

We prepared our briefings online. We mainly did this because we had so little time on the first two days, but I actually think these briefings should always be put online. Listening through briefings is really energy consuming while debaters just want to start debating as soon as possible and judges are bored since they've heard it all before. Limit the time for a briefing to around 15 minutes where people can ask some questions if they want to, or in which you can say a thing or two about the type of motions you will be running. Keep briefings really short though. And put most of it online.

### **2 Motions**

We started with motions about three months in advance. Since we had eight preliminary rounds, we had to think of 14 new and challenging motions. You really need to take a lot of time for this. OrgComm wanted us to deliver the motions of the prelims well in advance to they could make some

movies to introduce them. I was against this from the start, and I would advice against it. You want as much liberty as possible in order to be creative and ensure a proper set of motions. I do not regret offering a compromise to OrgComm since it meant a lot to them, but in hindsight, I would not have agreed again. That is not to say I do not appreciate the efforts of the people who made the movies, I just believe these efforts did not lead to the desired results.

We worked on the motions in a Google document. If someone had new ideas, they would post them in the document and we could all have a think about it and leave our comments. We had several (late night) Skype discussions in order to finalize the list. I thought this worked rather well. That being said, nothing works better than just being together in the same room and chatting about motions as well, but if you're not in the same country and have busy daily schedules, I think Skype and Google docs are a very good alternative.

You have to really talk through motions and see whether there is an equal number of persuasive opp things and prop things to say. I think we have made a very challenging set of motions, and perhaps for some teams it was harder to think of arguments for one side or the other. We believe that, if Euros is about finding the best teams in Europe, it is no good to overly simplify motions. Surely, motions must be accessible to all, but the way in which we did this was by setting motions that had a lot of angles in them. Many could be debated based on current affairs as well as political or philosophical principles. We felt this ensured that everyone had a proper chance of winning a debate, while, at the same time, the motions remained very challenging.

It is important to double-check motions for the possibility of different interpretations of a word. This is especially relevant for teams for which English is not their first language. English speakers are perhaps better in getting the right 'context' of a debate and they will interpret a word in the right way. However, people with less experience with the language may not have that ability, and you need to make the words in your motions as little ambiguous as possible.

### **3 Material needs**

I can recommend a separate room for the tab team and a separate room for the ca-team. They should be very near to each other, preferably adjacent. Make sure you can quickly get in touch with the runners/volunteers room or the person who is the head of all the runners to communicate last minute changes in the tab. I was always the last person to start my room in order to make sure all rooms had been sorted.

Make sure you have several laptops available in the tab room and in the CA room. We had a white board, a chalk board, a flipchart and a huge beamer + screen. We wrote all our to-dos on one board, all our notes on judges on the other. When the draw was made, Jens would come in and plug in the tab computer on the projector and we projected the entire draw on a huge screen. This made manual adjustment so much quicker and easier as we could point at things and keep perfect oversight. Great system.

Be prepared for delays and don't panic about them. There are always unforeseen things that happen, for instance: Whilst preparing a round, a computer had a faulty hardware that caused it to crash twice before the almost ready draw had been saved. Things like that easily cost you half an hour, and it's almost impossible to avoid. If they happen, focus on finding a solution and not on lamenting the problem.

You also need different colour papers for each round; makes it easier to sort them out. You should also have different colours for each feedback paper. Colours are nice. Print the sheets well on time as it takes a while to print everything.

## **4 Communication**

### **4.1 With OrgComm**

We designed a pretty cool communication system, that would ensure effective communication. The only people that could directly contact me were the head of the volunteers, the head of the runners and the head of the announcements. Not everyone could contact everyone, and that was quite useful for me.

We also have local phones for the DCAs and tab, and I had a walkie-talkie. The walkie-talkie was useful, but it's also rather disruptive when you're trying to concentrate on something. A knock on the CA room was more effective for getting in touch with me than the walkie, that turned out to be a bit frustrating for the team, but it was unavoidable.

### **4.2 With CA Team**

Make sure you get Skype. Try to have Google documents on stuff you're working on so everyone can work on it at a convenient time for them. Be patient in communication, but try to continue to know what everyone is doing. If somebody needs time off for exams or something, that's absolutely fine, but tell them they should tell you, just so you know about it.

## **5 Tab team**

We worked with Tournaman and I can strongly recommend this program to anyone. Make sure the tab team gets to know each other before Euros and do at least one or two test runs with the whole team. We also practiced our runner system three weeks in advance and that proved very useful indeed, because we could fine tune the runner system to the design of the building. Grant the tabber the space to design a system around him and facilitate as much as you can. Don't rush them and always be calm in the tab room. Since that is quite hard, you should have a separate CA room so that anything you need to negotiate with OrgComm or anyone else is not done in the tab room. Grant them as much peace and chocolate as possible.

If possible, make sure that the tab room (and the CA room) are located centrally, and close to the announcement hall(s). That facilitates for short ways, and little jogging.

Ask the tab team to give every member of the CA team a print out of the entire draw whilst the ballots are printed. After you have shown the draw, expect to have at least 5 people come up to the front with questions, and you want every DCA to have a print of the draw so they can answer those questions.

Ask people who have run Euros or Worlds before to tell them how they designed their system. Do not invent the wheel again, people with experience can tell you how this is done well, and it saves you a lot of time and effort to design a system yourself. This is highly dependent on the way the building is designed, so there is no perfect solution. Still, ask advice about as much as you can about tabbing and adjudicating and the runners system. I learnt the most from discussing things with former CAs and convenors or OrgComm members.

## **6 Feedback system**

Now, this is a tricky thing. It takes a lot of paper and a dedicated tab team to process all the feedback. We had a tabber write a really great online system based on the instructions of the CA team and his own insight. That system is available for anyone who wants to use it.

The tab team fills in the data on the feedback forms and this data is sorted into a big judges tab. The ones with the highest number of points end on top. You can click on the names of any judges and all the specific data about that person unfolds. You really want to look at how judges give feedback on each other, because teams are sometimes angry when they fill in their form and their scores may not be representative of the judge. However, do take bad feedback from teams seriously, if a judge gets a few really bad scores, you want to put this judge with a chair you trust and inquire whether or not the angry teams have a point.

Another thing I recommend is that you ask the tab team to sort out any form with comments on them, and you have to read through all of these forms. Yes. You really should. Not everyone does this, and you save a lot of time if you ask the tab team to pre-select, but you should know what's on these forms, because it tells you a lot about the atmosphere in the rooms and that is something you want to know about.

In the future, I hope a CA team takes the time to set up a system in which debaters and judges can fill in their feedback form online in order to cut out the paper route to the tab room. I tried to develop one, but we worried too much about all the laptops we had to place around the debate venues. We could not lock any rooms in the building, so theft was a real concern. Our final system was the result of my attempt to digitalize feedback, but it still required a lot of effort from an already busy tab team.

## **7 Judges test**

We wanted to look at three things in our judges test. 1) Ability to find the right call; 2) insight in the debate and 3) general knowledge about the debating rules. We learned a lot from the test, and I think it was very useful to write an explanation of our call as well as a list of mistakes that were commonly made in a document that people could read. Surely it is useful to have a general briefing about it, but if you have the time to write it down, I think you should. There's a higher chance your briefing will actually reach people when they can read the document in a moment in which they can concentrate (which is not when they are sitting amongst people they haven't seen in ages).

## **8 Judges rotation**

We used the results of the test and the CV of a judge to give them a preliminary ranking. That ranking could go up or down according to their incoming feedback. We based their allocation on panels on this ranking, and Tournaman has a great way of facilitating that. We also believed it was very important that chairs get to see different levels of rooms, so everyone can benefit from their feedback. We rotated judges around the 'straight seconds' level (getting a second in every round on average). If a judge went to a -3 round, he or she would get a +1 or +2 in the next round. We kept track of this on a white board. I think this worked really well and I can recommend this to anyone else.

## **9 Equity**

Nick Long was a very good equity officer. I was very late with finding an equity officer, and I should have asked one earlier on. But, having Nick was great. It's good to have something who you trust to handle situations well and you can completely leave it in their hands. What is important is that you

need to start discussing a set of 'punishments' for equity violations well in advance of the tournament as not everyone in the team may agree with your policies. It's nice if everyone does agree about this (and we roughly had this situation) but you want to avoid any discussions about punishments right before the tournament. You have to think of measures when people do sad things during debates, but, to my great sadness, you should also think of what to do if people do sad, sad things outside of debates.

## **10 Atmosphere**

It's worth investing in creating a good atmosphere in the team. You will have to deal with a lot of things at the same time and this puts a lot of stress on your mind. Try to have moments of comic relief and just a nice thing to eat or drink to give you brain some moment to process all the information in your mind.

*If there are any other questions from an organizing team: please contact Jonathan Leader Maynard when your question is about the judging test and rotation and contact Leela Koenig if it is about anything else.*

*Good luck to you all and enjoy yourselves while you're at it.*