



Summary of BAMSA Report for the European Bridge League
Challenges, Issues and Solutions facing National Bridge Organisations in Europe,
Snellgrove, M. L. & Punch, S. (2020)

Bridge: A MindSport For All (BAMSA) was invited to run a seminar session at the European Bridge League's (EBL) bi-annual NBO Seminar in Prague (February 2020) on:

1. the key issues and challenges facing European national bridge organisations (NBO)
2. suggestions for future solutions regarding these issues
3. how and in what way academic research findings might be able to aid regional NBOs and by extension the EBL.

The main points raised are summarised below:

- 1) **Issues:** Ageing and recruitment were flagged up as ongoing issues, as were problems around money and getting sponsors. Even large NBOs with money were always looking for more money/sponsorship. Older teachers were seen as an issue and the diversity of teaching practice across the many different NBOs an ongoing problem (ie. replicated efforts in terms of designing materials and inconsistent quality). Gendered issues were raised about the lack of women playing at elite level. Another issue was the need to make the federations more useful to clubs and members.

Furthermore, why should people learn to play bridge? The fact that it is a complex game often puts people off and this perception is not helped by some negative behaviours in clubs that put off newer members, whether younger or older. EBL/WBF need to do more to inform NBOs of existing teaching and research practice that could be of direct use to NBOs.

- 2) **Solutions:** Engage in a digital marketing campaign to attract other kinds of players. Develop an app (like with chess) so that younger players can learn through their phones. Empower women in bridge as a way to overcome the sexism in the mind-sport. EBL/WBF to actively disseminate teaching materials that have proved successful from other clubs. A standardised teaching curriculum with appropriate resources would be welcome. Target youth groups and create a social environment that bridge is part of but not the main aim. Replace cards with iPads to help tackle the image issue.
- 3) **Research:** Robust and reliable research evidence would be useful if it can show the benefits of the mind-sport, whether that is through healthy ageing or social connections – either way the research needs to have sufficient proof so that NBOs can use it to lobby their local governments/sponsors for money, but also to attract new members.

Whilst most of these findings will be unsurprising to the bridge community, research that is valid and credible needs to be based on empirical data and not on assumptions. These responses are the start for designing a global NBO survey and ultimately developing the kind of research the bridge community is asking for: robust, credible and useful for clubs, organisations and future bridge generations.

[Read the full report on the BAMSA website](#)