

Table of Contents

<u>1.</u>	<u>Introduction and Executive Summary</u>	4
<u>2.</u>	<u>The Federation</u>	5
<u>2.1.</u>	<u>Background</u>	5
<u>2.2.</u>	<u>Financial situation</u>	6
<u>3.</u>	<u>Mission statement</u>	7
<u>4.</u>	<u>SWOT analysis</u>	8
<u>5.</u>	<u>Strategic pillars</u>	9
<u>5.1.</u>	<u>Base development</u>	10
<u>5.1.1.</u>	<u>Professional assistance</u>	10
<u>5.1.2.</u>	<u>Include in schools' curriculum</u>	10
<u>5.1.3.</u>	<u>New "ecosystem"</u>	10
<u>5.1.4.</u>	<u>Adult education centres</u>	10
<u>5.1.5.</u>	<u>General public</u>	10
<u>5.1.6.</u>	<u>Online teaching</u>	11
<u>5.2.</u>	<u>Infrastructure</u>	11
<u>5.2.1.</u>	<u>Administrative footprint</u>	11
<u>5.2.2.</u>	<u>Transparency</u>	11
<u>5.2.3.</u>	<u>Procedures manual</u>	11
<u>5.2.4.</u>	<u>Code of conduct and Disciplinary code</u>	11
<u>5.2.5.</u>	<u>Education infrastructure</u>	11
<u>5.2.6.</u>	<u>Directors</u>	12
<u>5.2.7.</u>	<u>Technology</u>	12
<u>5.2.8.</u>	<u>Master point scheme</u>	12
<u>5.3.</u>	<u>Footprint in Cyprus</u>	12
<u>5.3.1.</u>	<u>Rebrand</u>	13
<u>5.3.2.</u>	<u>Media coverage</u>	13
<u>5.3.3.</u>	<u>Website and social media</u>	13
<u>5.3.4.</u>	<u>Promotion events</u>	14
<u>5.4.</u>	<u>International relations</u>	14
<u>5.4.1.</u>	<u>European Bridge League</u>	14
<u>5.4.2.</u>	<u>Hellenic Bridge Federation</u>	15
<u>5.4.3.</u>	<u>Other neighbouring NBO</u>	15
<u>5.4.4.</u>	<u>Small Federations</u>	15
<u>5.5.</u>	<u>Talent development</u>	15

<u>5.6.</u>	<u>Competitions</u>	16
<u>5.6.1.</u>	<u>Pancyprian championships</u>	16
<u>5.6.2.</u>	<u>International Festival</u>	16
<u>5.6.3.</u>	<u>Online play</u>	16
<u>5.7.</u>	<u>Financial independence</u>	17

1. Introduction and Executive Summary

The purpose of this document is to set out the strategic priorities of the Cyprus Bridge Federation (“CBF”) in accordance with its mission statement and as required by the code of good governance of the Cyprus Sports Organisation.

2. The Federation

2.1. Background

CBF was formed in 1960 and operates as a sports federation member of the Cyprus Sports Organisation, the body set up by the state to oversee the operation of sports federations in Cyprus. CBF is therefore the sole recognised authority to administer Bridge as a sport in the Republic of Cyprus. CBF is also an associated member of the Cyprus Olympic Committee (“COC”).

CBF is a full member of the European Bridge League and the World Bridge Federation. Bridge as a sport through WBF is a member of ARISF and GAISF, which are international associations of sports federations, and also the International Mind Sports Association.

The Federation currently has five full member clubs. The Nicosia Bridge Club, the Limassol Bridge Association, the Ayios Andreas Bridge Club, the Zenon Bridge Club and the Lefkara Mind Sports Club.

Only members of these clubs are eligible for an athlete’s ID which allows them to participate in the CBF’s Pancyprian competitions, gain master points and apply for inclusion in the national team. CBF has an organised players’ database and the Master Points scheme is automated through the bridgewebs.com score hosting platform used by the clubs and separately by the CBF for the Pancyprian events.

CBF organises on an annual basis the Pancyprian championships: individual, Swiss pairs, teams, pairs, mixed pairs, teams cup and also an international Bridge festival all of which (with the exception of the individual) award gold master points.

CBF introduced Bridge in the adult education centres of the Ministry of Education in 2010 something which was successful in bringing in new players. Ongoing efforts to introduce Bridge in extracurricular activities of private secondary education and University of Cyprus had no solid results. Consequently, few athletes were introduced to the sport in recent years, most of whom at a mature age, and therefore the majority of the athletes are over the age of 60. There is an urgent need to increase the athlete base of the sport.

With respect to international participation, the CBF hired reputable foreign Bridge trainers since 2010 namely Krzysztof Martens, Bob McPhee, Manos Hatzidakis and Christina Syrakopoulou to train primarily the pre-national and national teams but with an open audience. Furthermore, Philippos Frangos, in addition to his tenure as national team coach in 2015, ran a series of advanced lessons. All this had a very positive effect on the athletes whose level of play and performance in international events improved significantly. CBF makes every effort to send a national team to all European Championships organised every two years and all European Small Federations Games organised annually. In 2008, the Federation sent a pair of, at that time

promising, young athletes to Beijing to take part in the 1st International Mind Games.

In 2015, CBF undertook to organise the 8th European Small Federations Games with excellent results, hosting at the time the president and several members of the executive committee of the European Bridge League. In February 2018, CBF organised the EBL's Tournament Director seminar and in 2022 the EBL's NBO officers' seminar, again receiving very good feedback. CBF has also been assigned to organise the 2022 Small Federation Games. It is the objective of the CBF to organise such events on a more regular basis. Importantly the net financial cost to the Federation to organise these events was very small.

COVID-19 has helped the CBF train many of its members to be able to participate in online games and online competitions that proved very popular were organised since March 2020 including CBF official championship.

2.2. Financial situation

CBF has had a healthy bank balance in recent years. The funds were mainly generated following a single successful investment a few years ago.

The main source of income of CBF is from the Cyprus Sports Organisation ("CSO") which subsidises all Cypriot sports federations mainly depending on size.

CSO covers substantially in full the expenses of the Federation in the categories: administration expenses, national team coaches, local competitions, base development, participation in international competitions, congresses abroad and subscriptions.

Other sources of income are the subscriptions from the member clubs, fees charged for the athlete's ID, surpluses, if any, from the festival and other events and bank interest. Furthermore, CBF manages to secure one-off small sponsorships from various sources.

To boost the revenue of CBF, the Board is considering a Pay-As-You-Play levy initially set at €0,50 per participant of duplicate sessions organised by the clubs. This is expected to yield in excess of €3.000 per year. CSO has been repeatedly requesting its member federations to find alternative sources of income.

3. Mission statement

The mission statement of the Federation is stated in article 2 of its constitution and it is as follows:

"Article 2 – Objectives

A

- a) The Federation's objectives are to promote and to implement programmes for the development, the spread and furtherance of Bridge as an Olympic Sport, the popularisation of the sport, to compete nobly, to attract youth to athletics and in general, to educate youth socially and culturally through the sport, as well as to develop friendship and cooperation among people in order to foster peace worldwide. To promote and implement measures for the elimination of violence from athletic grounds as well as banning the use of any method of bodily or nervous stimulation which may bring about a technical change to the natural competitive ability of the athletes.
- b) Furthermore, the Federation will develop and implement programmes for the furtherance, spread and promotion of various other forms of the abovementioned game that are not contrary to the purposes of the Federation

B

The Federation operates with the objective of promoting athletics in Cyprus both within as well as outside schools. The objective of the Federation is purely athletic.

C

- a) For the said objectives, the Federation cooperates with the competent authorities and particularly with the Ministry of Education and Culture, which is the competent Ministry for dealing with issues of athletics, with the Cyprus Sports Organisation, with the Cyprus Olympic Committee and others.
- b) The Federation, considering as its duty to contribute positively and essentially to the athletic planning for Cyprus, submits suggestions to the competent authorities, as well as conclusions, comments and proposals for the development, spread and promotion of the sport of Bridge.”

This primarily translates to a purpose to increase the base of Bridge as a sport in Cyprus with the ultimate performance indicator being the results of the national team in international competitions.

4. SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Solid game with dedicated supporters→ Presence all around Cyprus→ People willing to assist voluntarily→ Recognition by the state→ Good relations with EBL→ Positive history of hosting EBL events→ Healthy bank balance→ Support by the Hellenic Bridge Federation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Ageing population→ Learning requires time investment→ Negative image of a card game→ Young players don't like playing against much older opposition→ Society not used to playing late in the evening→ Sponsorship income is limited→ Current playing set-up not attractive to young players
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Support by the Ministry of Education→ Active promotion, which proved very effective in Greece→ Belotte is a very popular pastime in Cyprus→ Co-operation with other Mind Games Federations→ Funding opportunities from Sports Academy and EBL→ Hosting of further EBL events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Real danger of being driven into extinction by the lack of new players and the ageing of existing ones→ The financial situation of the clubs is deteriorating→ Financial support from the Cyprus Sports Organisation in decline

5. Strategic pillars

5.1. Base development

There is an urgent need to expand the base of athletes. In recent years the targeted efforts of CBF had little success. It now needs to concentrate on three target groups: youth in education, adult education centres and the general public through extensive promotion.

5.1.1. Professional assistance

In view of the urgency to expedite the attraction of new athletes to the game the Annual General Meeting of the CBF mandated the Board of Directors to seek professional advice of how to best approach it. This will be a priority of CBF in 2022.

5.1.2. Include in schools' curriculum

It is of crucial importance to follow up very carefully the plan to introduce Bridge to public education under the arm of the Ministry of Education as envisaged in the 2017 marketing plan.

In parallel to the efforts for public education, the efforts must continue to bring in private secondary schools that were positive to introducing Bridge as an extra-curricular activity and in particular GC School of Careers and The English School.

5.1.3. New “ecosystem”

It is also important to create a separate “ecosystem” for young players who will in all probability be reluctant to join the clubs that are in existence at the moment. In the first instance, that ecosystem would be within their school but eventually and as they grow older and graduate, they should have places to play by themselves. In the first instance, it can be considered to use the premises of the clubs at times that are not used, but eventually more permanent solutions must be sought.

5.1.4. Adult education centres

Adult education centres provided the main source of new players in the last few years. The centres are very popular in Cypriot society and promotion of the available programmes including Bridge is done by a special booklet issued annually by the Ministry of Education. CBF needs to continue supporting them.

5.1.5. Expatriate communities

The expatriate communities in Cyprus are possible sources of new members and we are actively pursuing this activity, not limiting ourselves to Cypriot nationals.

5.1.6. General public

The Hellenic Bridge Federation has been very successful in bringing in new players by advertising. Intensive advertising on, amongst others, Facebook for two months before the lesson series began proved very successful. Facebook, Google or even YouTube ads are quite cheap and have a very wide reach in Cyprus. Before any large-scale reach-out to the general public is done, it is important to put in place the right infrastructure referred to in section Infrastructure below.

5.1.7. Online activities

CBF organised regular competitions online on the BBO platform as a response to the pandemic of COVID-19 that proved quite popular. It is clear that it is important to maintain the online game as part of the regular activities of the CBF after the pandemic, something that is already done by major federations.

It is also important to take advantage of BBO to build the technical infrastructure and enhance online teaching which seems to be more convenient to prospective new athletes

5.2. Infrastructure

CBF still has some work to do in improving its administrative and technical infrastructure.

5.2.1. Administrative footprint

It is important for CBF to maintain a close connection with CSO and COC. This will be achieved by seeking regular meetings to discuss matters of interest to the sport, involving them in the CBF's activities and participating actively in their activities. CBF should also ensure to be compliant with the requests of CSO by way of circulars or specific recommendations following their audit of the CBF.

5.2.2. Transparency

With a view to accomplishing transparency and full stakeholder engagement in the CBF's strategy and actions, the CBF will ensure that the strategic plan, minutes of board meetings, minutes of member's meetings and any other relevant information is published in the CBF's website. Furthermore, it is important that the board has regular meetings with the presidents of the member clubs and also organise “feedback open days” where all stakeholders can attend to discuss matters of interest.

5.2.3. Procedures manual

CSO has provided all sports federations with a specimen procedures manual with the instruction to formally adopt it after first adapting it to their specific circumstances. CBF has not done this yet. In doing it, CBF should take the opportunity to clarify roles and responsibilities by including specific provisions about who is responsible for which task as well as procedures for the smooth operation of its committees.

5.2.4. Code of conduct and Disciplinary code

CBF needs to implement a Code of Conduct to set expected rules of behaviour for its athletes and also a Disciplinary Code to supplement the provisions of its constitution with the purpose of handling misconduct in a consistent and transparent manner.

5.2.5. Education infrastructure

Before starting any new initiative for the promotion of Bridge in Cyprus, it is of the utmost importance to have the right education infrastructure. This means to have a teacher licensing scheme involving examinations, a standard teaching method and material, ongoing education for teachers and a “Standard Cypriot” system to be used by all beginners.

It is also imperative that a solid teacher base is created. Such people need to be found by word of mouth and/ or advertising. The assistance of HBF must then be sought on training the trainers for licencing.

5.2.6. Directors

Directors are a scarce resource in Cypriot Bridge and a targeted effort must be made to find people interested to become Directors. For this to be successful, the proper incentives must be given. There should also be a Directors’ licencing scheme in the same lines as the teachers licencing scheme.

5.2.7. Technology

Technology is perhaps the most significant megatrend across the globe. CBF must keep abreast of technology developments in the field of Bridge and invest appropriately both in the technical area but also the organisation of its administration.

5.2.8. Master point scheme

The master point scheme is the result of extensive study and it constitutes a well-thought out system of categorising the athletes. Despite that, it has not been very successful in motivating athletes to play for master points.

Reasons for that may have been the over-awarding of club competitions compared to national championships despite the Gold Points awarded in the latter, the years needed for achieving the title of Grand Master and the sometimes indistinct categories (eg in Greece there are 16 numbered categories, in Cyprus it is not easily identifiable whether for examples a district master is closer to the top or the bottom of the 15 categories). The Master Point scheme is in need of revisiting to assess its inability to motivate.

5.3. Footprint in Cyprus

The sport is practically unknown in Cyprus, and only those who play it or attempted to play it in the past are aware of its depth and challenging nature. Irrespective of attracting someone to learn Bridge there are great benefits that people not actually attracted to the sport have a good awareness of what it is. The importance of the promotion of the sport merits the formation of a “promotion committee” in accordance with article 28 of the CBF’s constitution.

5.3.1. Rebrand

The current logo of CBF needs to change, a new, modern, eye-catching design is needed. It is important that this happens before the start of any promotion campaign. This should be assigned to a professional graphics designer.

5.3.2. Media coverage

Up-to now the CBF sent regular press releases about certain activities such as the organisation of the Small Federations Games and the Tournament Director Seminar in Cyprus, the participations of the national team in international championships, results of the Pancyprian championships and other. This needs to be enhanced further as follows:

- In newspapers (including their electronic version) Bridge can have a regular column which

can be addressed both to beginners but can also have an advanced problem with the aim to raise awareness about the game but also attract new players. In the past, Phileleftheros agreed to publish a weekly column but this was never implemented by the CBF.

- TV and radio coverage has been very rare to-date but there are opportunities for smaller sports to present their case. Video press releases should also be considered.
- CBF should consider issuing its own magazine, which can be online at its website dealing with issues of interest including problems, exercises and technical articles.
- CBF should consider issuing its own yearbook, like the HBF does.

5.3.3. Website and social media

CBF currently two websites www.cyprusbridge.org which is its main website and www.bridgewebs.com/cyprus which is used to post the results of the Pancyprian competitions. It also maintains a Facebook account @cyprusbridgefederation and a Twitter account @cyprusbridge.

Communication is key to the operation of a sports federation with its stakeholders and should be given proper attention. It is recommended that this area is given particular attention by the “promotion committee”. Examples of matters that merit further consideration are:

- The main website should be updated on a more regular basis to include, in addition to news from Cyprus, matters of interest from an international perspective and also training material, circulars and announcements by the CBF, microsites for beginners, advanced, and experts and other. It could also contain more information about the players in a similar way that WBF and EBL maintain their player databases.
- The Facebook and Twitter accounts to be more active and include news about everything about Bridge, technical challenges and other.
- A YouTube account to be created to host the videos produced by the CBF (more recent videos include 50 year event, TV coverage of certain Festivals, Small Federations in Protaras and event in Lakatameia primary school). In addition, training / technical videos can be created and uploaded.
- An Instagram account to be created to upload photos from various events.

5.3.4. Promotion events

Another way to promote Bridge is to organise regular promotion events. Over the years the CBF participated in Olympic days organised by the Cyprus Olympic Committee and in the #beactive event organised by the Cyprus Sports Organisation. Another event that proved quite successful but also financially profitable was the annual teams event organised at the Larnaca airport. The following events should be considered:

- Active participation in all events organised by the CSO and the COC.
- Approach the airport with a view to resume the annual event there. If not successful approach alternative but similar settings to stage one more of the Pancyprian competitions.
- Follow-up the initiative with the Chess and Go Federations about organising a mind sports day.
- Examine additional locations where a Bridge promotion event can be organised eg Mall of Cyprus.

5.4. International relations

5.4.1. European Bridge League

Good relations with the European Bridge League are important to put Cyprus on the map of European Bridge. This would have the effect of increased assistance by EBL in promoting Bridge in Cyprus, active support on infrastructure issues and also increased willingness to assign

events to CBF. CBF should seek every opportunity to present itself at EBL eg by seeking to present at the EBL officers' seminar.

Relationships with EBL president are important and an opportunity must be identified to invite him to Cyprus and also arrange a meeting with CSO and COC.

It should also be considered to nominate a representative for Cyprus for election in the executive committee of EBL.

5.4.2. Hellenic Bridge Federation

The relations with the Hellenic Bridge Federation should be enhanced. HBF can provide guidance and support on all matters of infrastructure including technical and education. It should also be examined whether Cyprus can be incorporated in the HBF championships and/ or master point scheme in the same way as HBF treats the Greek districts. Similarly, master points can be won by HBF when playing in CBF events.

In addition, CBF could participate in events organised by the HBF, for example the first 2 or 3 ranked pairs in the CBF open pairs competition could qualify to play in the finals of the open pairs of the HBF.

5.4.3. Other neighbouring NBO

Maintaining good relations with neighbouring NBO is also important with the following ideas meriting further consideration:

- Organised participation in festivals of neighbouring countries.
- Invitations to national teams for participation in the Cyprus International Festival.
- Organisation of friendlies or mini-tournaments of neighbouring national teams.

5.4.4. Small Federations

For a few years now, Small Federations have an allocated seat in the executive board of the EBL and their voice and specific problems being heard more loudly. CBF shares a lot of the issues faced by the Small Federations and should participate actively in the efforts that they make to address them.

It is important to keep a close relationship/ co-operation with the Small Federations, keeping an open conversation with the Small Feds representative at the EBL executive board communicating issues and seeking assistance and ensuring participation in the Small Feds meeting held every year. Exchanging views and success stories with Federations of similar size and issues would be beneficial.

5.5. Talent development

The mission statement of the CBF is clear in stating that the purpose of the Federation is athletic with the ultimate performance indicator being the results of the national team in international competitions.

Bridge can be played at its most basic level as a pastime but its depth and brilliance allow it to be played under the most competitive conditions in an international level. The purpose of the CBF commands it to concentrate its efforts to the competitive side of the sport and the performance of the national team should be its first priority and performance indicator.

The following should therefore be at the top of the priority list of the CBF:

- Identification of key talent and ensuring that it is not lost by providing the right support/ guidance and incentives.
- A targeted education and training programme including engaging a national team coach on a long-term basis.
- A mentor programme, utilising experienced athletes to coach and guide new talent.
- Ongoing pre-national team with specific training programme.
- 2-year national team, from one European Championship to the next, to eliminate gaps and engage them more.
- Revamping of the library of the CBF and stocking it with high quality Bridge books.

5.6. Competitions

5.6.1. Pancyprrian championships

The Pancyprrian Championships in recent years have had unexpectedly low participation. The format and incentives of the championships need to be considered in depth to boost their participation. The following should be considered further:

- Incentives to participants, including master points, qualification of winners to say participation to an HBF event or a neighbouring NBO Festival etc.
- The attractiveness of the venue, eg like the airport event.
- The length of the competition and the need for qualification.
- Broadcast on BBO.
- Separate competitions for weaker players.

5.6.2. International Festival

The Cyprus International Festival is a significant event of the year for the CBF. It gives it an opportunity to address quite a few of its priorities such as international relations, incentives to its members that get a chance to participate in a competitive event, opportunities for promotion within Cyprus and the EBL and others. The following need consideration with respect to the Festival:

- Promotion within CBF members or elsewhere eg BBO.
- Careful consideration of venue and agreements beneficial to the CBF.
- Targeted invitations to neighbouring NBO.
- Special arrangements for HBF.
- Invitations to internationally recognised athletes that would boost participation.
- Broadcasting of a table or two on BBO.
- Increase monetary prizes.
- Agree packages with Bridge travel agents.

5.6.3. Online play

Online play is becoming more and more popular across the world. Planning of online competitions can help to increase playing time of the sport across Cyprus. A series of events can be organised and added to the official calendar of CBF events. The clubs should be encouraged to organise online events themselves.

5.7. Financial independence

Despite the fact that the CBF maintains a healthy bank balance and its expenses are substantially covered by the subsidy of the CSO and the Sports Academy it must strive to become financially independent.

At the moment, the sport is heavily dependent on club table money which burdens the players. The players will be further imposed by the levy that the CBF proposes to introduce.

CBF must find alternative sources of income so that it becomes financially independent and more affluent to pursue its strategic objectives. The following should be pursued:

- Active search for recurring sponsors.
- Organising of profitable events.
- Financial support from other organisations eg OPAP.
- Extraordinary sponsorship eg national team shirts, festival etc