

President's Report 2025: Five Years of Collective Growth

Dear jugglers,

As my five-year term as President of the European Juggling Association comes to an end, I want to do this report a little differently. Instead of looking back at just the last year, I want to reflect on the journey we have shared since 2020. I have decided not to run for President again because I believe it is the right time for a new leader to build on our achievements and bring fresh energy to our community. I feel a sense of immense pride and gratitude in passing the torch, knowing the organisation is in a much stronger position today than when I started.

I hope this report shows you what we have built together, and what the next President can take to the next level.

Our Starting Point: The Challenges of 2020

Five years ago, our community faced huge challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic made the future of events like the EJC completely uncertain. Could we even meet again? Under what circumstances and rules? And because our rules relied on having a physical EJC to hold elections and other important processes, the European Juggling Association itself was under threat as well: without a festival, the very foundation of our organisation was at risk.

At the same time, the relationship between the Association and EJC organising teams had often been difficult. Organisers were often exhausted after their events, sometimes frustrated with the Association and didn't have the energy or motivation to stay involved. This created a significant experience gap—the expertise and lessons learned from organising one EJC were not easily passed on to the next team. This meant that each new team often had to start with limited information, which was especially hard during the uncertainty of the pandemic. The Association also relied on a very small group of volunteers, which made us fragile and prone to delays whenever someone's personal life got in the way. Our visibility was low, with an outdated brand and little public presence to attract new talent and support.



How We Responded

In 2020, we came together and created a clear plan to support EJC teams and strengthen our organisation. You can find more details about our strategy in the appendix below, but it can also be summarised in these three main goals:

1. **Help EJC teams succeed:** This was our core purpose, especially during a time of crisis. We wanted to make sure that despite the uncertain world, the festival could continue, as it is the heart of our community.
2. **Make the Association stronger:** We needed more volunteers and resources to be sustainable. By building a more robust and active association, we could offer more reliable support to the EJC teams.
3. **Share knowledge:** We wanted to make sure that EJC organisers could easily learn from each other. By improving this process, we could reduce organiser burnout and create a cycle of continuous improvement.

Where We Are Now: Our Successes

Looking back, our greatest success is this: **We have managed to have an EJC every year since 2020!** This was not easy, and it was a huge team effort that required incredible resilience and creativity from everyone involved.

- In 2021, when the EJC in Hanko couldn't happen in person, we worked with them to create the first **Virtual EJC 2021**. This was a significant creative effort, featuring live-streamed gala shows and online workshops that allowed us to keep the community connected and fulfil our statutory duties (like electing an EJC for 2024), even when we couldn't be together.
- The **44th EJC in Tres Cantos 2022** was our first in-person gathering after a long time apart. It was challenging but full of joy as we reconnected. The collective effort and understanding from the community helped us get through the messiness and enjoy the profound feeling of being reunited.
- Then, the team in **Lublin** showed incredible skill and commitment after two forced changes in location for the **45th EJC in 2023**: With incredible dedication, they successfully organised the EJC in less than 100 days!
- Last year, the **46th EJC in Ovar** was our first "normal" EJC in years. With a two-year planning window, we could test our new support systems and see them at work. It was a success, with over 3.000 participants and a small but solid positive financial outcome.

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- And lastly, this year, we will meet for the **47th EJC in Arnhem** for what promises to be one of the best-organised EJCs in our history, thanks to an incredible team who are not just great people with great skill, but also very capable at drawing on others' existing experience.

Our work has not only ensured the EJC's continuity but also made our community stronger. We now have a solid network of organisers and crew-level volunteers who stay involved and share their experience with new teams. We have grown from a small group of three or four volunteers to a large team of 10 to 30 people working actively throughout the year on different projects, including our communications team, our safeguarding working group, and the pre-registration team. We have diversified our income and a new, modern brand that helps us connect with more people.

Looking to the Future

I am immensely proud of what we have built together. We have created an organisation that is visible, welcoming, and full of incredible people who love to contribute. The EJA is now stronger and more stable, with more resources to support the EJC. A new President will bring their own ideas, but I have three wishes for our future:

- **Continue to support the EJC as partners.** I hope the tradition of collaboration continues and that we can plan EJCs even further in advance. This would give future teams more time and space to create truly inspiring and well-organised events.
- **Keep our culture of welcome and collaboration strong.** The relationships we have built are our most valuable asset. I hope we continue to invest in this culture to connect people beyond borders and differences through juggling and circus arts.
- **Keep improving.** While we've come far, there is still work to do. We are still reliant on EJCs for core procedures, our internal processes can still be more transparent, we could capture and share our knowledge better, and our organisational structure could be more efficient. For example, a clearer structure would make it easier to understand who is responsible for what, which is essential for attracting grants and managing our growing volunteer team.

Thank you all for your support and for five years of shared growth. I will continue to support this journey in any way I can.

Jonas Fathy

President of the European Juggling Association
(for a few more weeks)

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Acknowledgments

It is incredibly hard to count all the people who have supported the European Juggling Association and myself in my role over these last 5 years. Only in our workspace, there are over 100 names all of whom I recognise and know personally, and that does not include all the people who have supported us and the EJC independently of our work. This community that makes up the EJC is one of the greatest communities in the world, and I will forever be grateful to have served it.

First and foremost, my gratitude belongs to all those wonderful people who have served on the Executive Committee with me over the years. Stepping down, I will miss the especially wonderful team of **Bubba, Eileen, Gamze, Linde, Lucil, Marta, Sweets** and **Victor** - you all are fabulous human beings and I'm glad to call you not just colleagues but also friends! To Bubba, Linde and Sweets: the three of you have been with me from (almost) the very beginning (or more!) and we have gone through some very challenging times together. I couldn't have done this without you. I'm serious.

Since this is a report of the last five years, though, I do want to give a shout out to all those who joined us on this journey, even if just for a time: **Alejandro, Cat, Kamil, Mittens, Ron, Simi** - thank you! You made a difference at a time you were needed!

I will not be able to do the same here for all our **board members, EJC teams** and **volunteers** over the years. All those who have joined our board meetings, our working group meetings, who have worked to create policies or solve problems, who have shown up when we needed them and who have given so much. And although I will fail to mention them all, I want to give it a try:

Ali, Andi, Anton, Amir, Amandine, Ben, Blue, Cat, Celina, Daniel, Dee, Des, Det, Elliot, Emma, Eva, Fred, Fred, Gabriella, Garry, Geo, Giulia, Guy, Iñigo, Ivo, Jacob, Jakub/Kuba, Joanna, Kevin, Lena, Leo, Luca, Magda, Maria, Mariella, Melissa, Miark, Momo, Nao, Nico, Niklas, Nuno, Nuala, Nuria, Nurit, Paul A, Paul M, Patryk, Philip, Rachel, Ray, Roland, Simon, Shai, Sonja, Sylvain, Tina, Thom, Tobi, Verena and **Zofia**. I'm certain that I have forgotten someone. If your name is not on this list and you feel that it should be, it is not because I don't value you, but because I made a blunder. You - all of you - are amazing, and I look forward to seeing you again in different constellations in the future!



Appendix: A Deeper Look into Our Journey

For those who may not have been part of our journey from the beginning, here is some more detail on the challenges we faced and the progress we have made.

The Challenges We Faced in 2020

Five years ago, organising an EJC was a very difficult task. Many of the previous EJC teams had felt burnout and were reluctant to stay involved with the EJA. This created a knowledge gap—the expertise gained from organising one EJC was not easily passed on to the next team. This meant that each new team often had to start from scratch, which was especially hard during the uncertainty of the pandemic.

In addition, the EJA itself was struggling to attract volunteers. The work was done by a very small group, online work between EJCs was very scarce, and new people who joined often weren't sure how to help. We had to change this to make sure the organisation could keep going, even if a few people had to step away.

Our Progress on the Six Original Priorities

To address these challenges, we set out with a clear strategy. Here is an overview of the progress we have made on each of our six priorities:

1. **Recruit and support EJC teams:** We have been incredibly successful in this area, recruiting and supporting teams to host an EJC every year, even through the pandemic. We have built strong partnerships and support structures, such as a mentoring programme where experienced organisers advise new teams, which helps them succeed.
2. **Improve the visibility of the European Juggling Association:** We have made significant progress with our visibility. The EJA now has a new, modern brand, including a new logo and a more professional website. This has made the association more attractive to jugglers and has helped us to better communicate our mission and successes.
3. **Create independent income streams:** We have started to diversify our income, for example, through the EJA contribution at pre-registration and our own merchandise. This has given us more financial stability to support our work and allows us to invest in activities that directly benefit the EJC teams.



4. **Improve internal systems and processes:** This is an area where we have made some progress but still have more to do. While we have established better systems for communication and project management, there is a lot of room for improvement in areas like transparency and the systematic distribution of knowledge to all our volunteers.
5. **Make the Association's knowledge & information more accessible:** We have begun to improve how we share *experience* (meaning information that is hard to write down) between EJC teams, for example, through site visits and securing continued involvement of people with experience in different fields. However, we still need to create a more centralised and easily accessible library of *knowledge* (meaning data and information that can be written down) for the public and future organisers.
6. **Create an organisational structure that is structurally independent from the EJC:** We have not made significant changes to our organisational structure. This is an area that needs to be addressed to improve clarity around responsibility, which would, in turn, make it easier to apply for grants and manage our growing team.

This collective effort has transformed our organisation. It is a true success story that a new President can now build on.