

# EFTTA FACING AN UPHILL STRUGGLE

**S**o, this would have been our EFTTEX Preview issue. It has been that way for the June issue of *Angling International* every year since Rome 2008. In that time we have followed the show to Budapest, Valencia, Amsterdam, Paris, Vienna, Warsaw and Brussels. We have helped promote every one of those shows, conscious of the commitment we made to EFTTA at our launch in 2007 to support EFTTEX and the wider European tackle trade.

But not this year. EFTTEX in Prague is cancelled, and badly cancelled at that. We knew it was coming, of course. But while other show organisers in our trade – and elsewhere in associated industries – took clear, decisive and timely action, EFTTA waited until just one month before its show date to inform its members of its decision.

One month, and with barely any ‘holding’ communication before that. EFTTA, I’m afraid to say, kept its members in the dark at precisely the time they needed clarity and good leadership. And now we know why, and, I’m sorry to add, it gets worse.

In the words of CEO Olivier Portrat at the time of his belated announcement, EFTTA was waiting for the Czech government to make its decision for it. If EFTTA had made a unilateral decision before any official directive from the Czechs, he says, ‘there would have been an obligation on us to refund our exhibitors... and that would have signalled the end of the association.’

As we at *Angling International* understand those words – and the words in the official EFTTA press release that the show has been ‘postponed’ to next year and not cancelled – there is no obligation upon EFTTA right now to offer refunds. Indeed the press release adds that ‘all stand bookings remain valid’ and ‘payments can be deferred to next year’ when the show will be returned to Prague and not rotated to another European venue as per tradition. You may well need that cash more than ever right now but the needs of EFTTA, it seems, override the needs of your business.

To be fair to Olivier, he has since spoken to me at length about the predicament EFTTA now finds itself in. EFTTA is in a battle for its very survival, he says, because of lost revenues from EFTTEX. And survive it must, because without it you and your businesses will be under great threat from outside forces.

**“Already members are contacting us and demanding we ask more serious questions of the Association.”**

Olivier has not hidden away and I admire him for that. But I fear he is fighting a losing battle. There are flaws in the EFTTA business model that have been brutally exposed by the Coronavirus pandemic. And there is a disconnect between EFTTA and its members that pre-dates Olivier’s arrival but has very little chance of being fixed quickly. The lack of communication over EFTTEX has seen to that.

The engine designed to drive the European tackle trade is seizing up. EFTTA, by the CEO’s own admission, is running on fumes.

Already members are contacting us and demanding that we ask more serious questions of the Association. Unfortunately for Olivier Portrat and the EFTTA Board, there are difficult months ahead. I agree with exhibitors and visitors to EFTTEX that EFTTA has a case to answer; and we would not be doing our job here if we did not hold the Association to account.

We have supported EFTTA in the past. We can do so again in the future. But given the predicted cost-cutting and the distrust of the members, the question is, what will EFTTA look like and what functions will it perform for the trade in the next 12 months? It will be up to its members to decide because they will be funding those activities; and up to the Board and the CEO to persuade members of their value. The question will be, what exactly will there be to support?

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