

‘COVID killed our business model’



Why EFTTEX has gone it alone and who bankrolled EFTTA through COVID? EFTTA CEO **Olivier Portrat** opens up on new realities.

What are EFTTA's priorities and why did the organisation move from the UK?

Brussels is the lobbying capital of the European Union and without our work recreational fishing would probably disappear from the EU within a few years.

The EU has declared war against plastic litter and toxic substances. EFTTA welcomes this war, but it is aware that – if not handled well – this situation will become quite critical and delicate as anglers lose the use of plastics and other materials including lead.

This is just one example that underlines why the presence of EFTTA in Brussels is indispensable. It is grassroots working for a healthy future for recreational fishing.

As long as the UK was part of the EU, it was fine for EFTTA to have its seat in London. But due to Brexit, that changed. It simply made no sense to remain in a country that is not part of the EU.

What are the other advantages of Brussels?

Being here means that EFTTA can apply for financial help and funding from the EU.

Aid might be useful in the case of a future crisis like COVID, but it is also very useful to get a subvention – grant – for carrying out important data collection. Anglers need much more information about our activities and this is expensive.

Without serious data it is difficult to move forward in our cooperation with the EU. This is why funding is so important.

Who makes up the new EFTTA team?

EFTTA's lobbying team includes 'our man in Brussels' Jan Kappel and our representatives within the European Parliament, Aliénor.

In Saarbrücken, Germany, there is myself as CEO of EFTTA and Margit Bogler, the Office Manager. The work of the EU is split between Brussels and Strasbourg and we are not far from the French city.

With no EFTTEX for three years, how has EFTTA been funded?

The business model of an EFTTEX-funded EFTTA was killed by COVID-19.

All our Board of Directors have made

“The Board members made extraordinary payments to keep EFTTA afloat.”

extraordinary payments to keep the EFTTA ship afloat. They agreed to pay much more in membership fees. The big players now pay ten times more than in the past.

I am extremely grateful for the Board's understanding and continuous support of EFTTA, but it's because the future of the angling industry in Europe determines the future of their business.

I would like to say a big thank you to the EFTTEX Working Group of Ciro Esposito (Europesca), Rudi Heger (Traun River Products) and Istvan Pal (Energofish) who have made considerable efforts to help the survival of EFTTA during these difficult years by organising another EFTTEX show. When that was not possible because of the war in the Ukraine, they set up the virtual



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Best New Product Showcase to compensate for the financial loss to EFTTA.

What is the future for EFTTEX?

Trade shows are evolving. The big companies have their own social media experts and an army of salesmen. They do not need EFTTEX like they used to in the past to promote their new products or have direct contact with retailers.

It is different for the small to medium-sized businesses who still do need a show. It's something that we learnt while preparing for next year's event in Budapest.

The big players in the industry – Daiwa, Pure Fishing, Rapala VMC Corporation, Rather Outdoors and Shimano – have clearly stated that their money should be exclusively for lobbying activities and not the organisation of a trade show.

My goal is to finance the work of EFTTA with the membership fees. That is why we increased the annual subscription to the large organisations and medium-sized companies, but not the smaller ones.

To respect those wishes, Hungarian-based EFTTEX Kft has been formed by Istvan, Rudi and Giro with their own money. All the money from EFTTEX will be forwarded to EFTTA, but no EFTTA money will be used for any EFTTEX purposes.

What of EFTTA?

The new structure, EFTTA-AISBL is an international non-profit association. This means that all of our money is used to work for the brightest possible future for angling.

What's your message to the membership?

The Board of Directors of our new association – EFTTA-AISBL – is bigger than ever before with all the main players involved. This was not the case when it was based in England. Our new association has more weight than ever.

We have the important support of them all and they understand that our 'grassroots' work in Brussels is absolutely crucial if our sport is to enjoy a decent future within the EU. But we need the support of the entire industry.

Our work is essential for all companies active in Europe, not only the big players. Without EFTTA and its work, recreational fishing within the EU will die within a few years. If your business is related to this industry, you simply have to support EFTTA by becoming a member.