

An Operational Guideline for Expert Group at Work at FIP World Stamp Exhibitions

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Introduction

This Operational Guideline is intended for use by the Expert Group at the FIP exhibitions, which may also be applicable at the continental exhibitions.

Role

The purpose for the creation of an Expert Group at the FIP exhibition is to check the exhibits for any forged items. The group members are to verify the existence of authenticated certificates, and to recommend appropriate actions in case forged, faked, repaired and doubtful items are detected. The Expert Group shall consist of a minimum of 3 members (including the Group Team Leader), preferably each member specializes in or is more well verse with a specific continent's philatelic materials, that is, Europe, America, Asia respectively. They are to be equipped with a pair of "sharp eyes" being able to see and spot the questionable items which may not be within their scope of specialization. They are to be selected by the Exhibition Management in consultation with the FIP Consultant. The FIP Board is to give the consent and final approval.

Independency

The Expert Group is independent of the Jury. For this reason and also to ensure the smooth operation of the Expert Group, the Exhibition Management shall provide a separate compartment or an enclosed cubicle in the Jury Room. The essential equipment to be provided are computer, scanner, colour printer, handy magnifying glass (at best of 15 times magnifying power), an English speaking assistant capable of operating the computer & scanner and a CD or thumb drive to save all the completed scanning work for FIP record. Unauthorized person shall not have access or cause any interruption of or interference with the work of the Group. To avoid misunderstanding and unnecessary embarrassments, officials or representatives of any FIP Commissions or persons who are not directly responsible for the functions of the Expert Group shall refrain themselves from interfering while the Expert Group is at work. All matters pertaining to the Expert Group shall be referred to the Group Team Leader or the Secretary of the Jury.

Procedures

In the case of a 7-day Exhibition (with 4 days of judging):

Preparatory Work

The Expert Group Team Leader and the FIP Board Director in charge of the Commission for the Fight Against Forgeries shall plan, organize and control all processes of the work of the Expert Group prior to and during the exhibition according to the schedule of Time Table for Jury, Expert Group and National Commissioners.

- 1) The Group Team Leader and FIP Board Director in charge of the Commission for the Fight Against Forgeries and the Expert Group Team Leader shall receive the Competitive Exhibits Listing from the Exhibition Management (It is the responsibility of the FIP Consultant to ensure that they receive the Listing 3 solid months prior to the exhibition dates).
- 2) The said FIP Board Director shall study the Listing and identify the exhibits which have items that required certificates and items that do not exhibit again (as recommended from the previous exhibitions).
He shall then prepare an action list for further inspection containing

- (a) name of exhibitor
- (b) country of exhibitor
- (c) title of exhibits
- (d) detailed items in question for certificates, with illustrations sheets attached.

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The information should be delivered or sent by email to the Expert Group Team Leader for attention, to reach him at least 5 weeks in advance.

The Expert Group Team Leader will communicate with the respective commissioners (1) to ask for copies of the certificates of the specific items from the exhibitors, preferably to receive by the Group Team Leader before his departure for the Exhibition, (2) to ascertain whether the “items do not exhibit again” has been complied with.

Day 1 (After roll call at first Jury and Expert Group meeting)

- 1) The Group Team Leader shall check to ensure that all the necessary papers (such as Registration Forms (see ANNEX I), notice for removal of exhibit), photocopier, scanning equipment and the assistant operating the scanner, printer and computer etc. are readily available.
- 2) The Group Team Leader shall brief and discuss with group members of the daily programme and distribution of work where necessary.
- 3) The first task is to make a specific review of exhibits which have received unacceptable reports at previous FIP exhibitions, and check whether the item in question is on display (unless the certificate has been submitted before the exhibition or the item is not shown). When the item is found, the Group should take note of the frame and page Nos., and name of the national commissioner concerned (for the purpose of dismantling the exhibit pages subsequently). An additional checking form is to be used (see ANNEX II). In order to ensure speedy spotting of the item and based on past experience, it is advisable that all three members do the quick check together.
- 4) If time permits on Day 1, members of the Group may proceed to examine all exhibits in the Championship Class. All the exhibits of the Grand Prix candidates (Grand Prix National, Grand Prix International, Grand Prix d’Honneur and Grand Prix d’Exposition) should be examined immediately upon receipt of the list from the Jury Secretary on Day 2.

Day 2

- 1) Members of the Expert Group shall judiciously inspect exhibits for new and doubtful items in every competitive class including the most senior group in Youth Class and shall aim for at least 5% of the total number of exhibits. Group Team Leader may wish to divide among themselves into 3 sub-teams, each examining items of certain classes or areas (eg Europe, America and Asia/Pacific). One Registration Form is meant for use for one philatelic item in a sheet of exhibit, and all information stipulated in the Form should be accurately filled. Another Registration Form is required for the examination of a second item in the same sheet of exhibit. A single Registration Form may be used if the same opinion is sought for a set of stamps on a single exhibit sheet.
- 2) Expert Group Team Leader is to discuss with the Commissioner-General (preferably at Commissioners Meeting) to arrange for date and time for the dismantling of questionable exhibits, and the supply of helpers, to open the frames.
- 3) Judging Teams are to submit the Registration Forms for dubious items to the Jury Secretary for handing over to Expert Group within the first 2 days of judging.
- 4) It is advisable that all the Registration Forms (including exhibits queried at previous exhibitions) be arranged in the sequence of frames numbering. This would help facilitate the workflow of dismantling on the following day.

Day 3

- 1) Ideally, the dismantling of exhibit pages containing doubtful items for closer examination should be done in the morning (so that the items after examination can be returned and remounted on the same day).

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- 2) Expert Group's meeting with the National Commissioners shall be scheduled for 10am in the morning, and another meeting for return of exhibits in the late afternoon. Some Commissioners and the representatives of the Exhibition Management will accompany the Expert Group Members to the frames to witness the dismantling of pages concerned. An A4-size sheet of Notice "Temporarily Removed by the Organizing Committee" (see Annex III) should be placed immediately when the particular page is removed. It is necessary for the Group to bring along a large container (a big paper bag or box) to keep these exhibits. *[Note: The purposes of dismantling such pages are that (1) the Expert Group has to ascertain whether the certificates are attached and to check the contents of the certificates, and (2) at time the Expert Group has to examine the postmark's on the reverse of the covers, and/or to study the stamps in question. There was a case of an exhibit with certificate stating that the item is faked, but it was found on display, inadequately described. Furthermore, the certificates have to be scanned or photocopied for record purposes. Although digital camera can be a last resort in the absence of a scanner, the result is not ideal as the quality of pictures is poor due to reflection or lack of expertise. Records of some past exhibitions show that the items were actually photographed, but there was no follow up to produce the pictures for the files].*
- 3) Every page removed from the frame shall be examined and a report shall be made on the Registration Form with a scanned image in colour for FIP's records. A reference No. (eg **SP07/GR/2203/2195-7**) shall be allocated and quoted on each Registration Form. *[Note: **SP07** denotes St Petersburg 2007 i.e. name of exhibition & year/ **GR** denotes Greece (country of exhibit, not the exhibitor)/ **2203** denotes exhibit No./ **2195** denotes frame No. where the said page is on display and **-7** denotes the said page's position,].* In this case, it is Row 2 (second row) third page counting from left of Row 2 (or 7th page counting from 1st page of Row No 1). The Expert Group Team Leader shall put down his signature, signifying his endorsement to the action proposed.
- 4) Actions proposed by the Expert Group are usually of the following types: **1) No Action Taken** (when the items examined are in good order); **2) Do Not Show Again** (when the items are really in dubious condition and certificates are unlikely to be issued); **3) Recommend to Obtain a Certificate** (this is to tell the exhibitor that the items are doubtful and it is in his interest to have the items certified, if he wishes to show them again in future exhibitions). The Expert Group may also recommend downgrading the exhibit by 1 level of 5 points or more (usually for items without certificates, despite notices being given more than once); or to disqualify the exhibit from this and/or future FIP exhibitions (when there are more than half a dozen of forgeries in the exhibit).
- 5) The items, after examination and scanning/photocopying, shall be returned to the National Commissioners concerned for remounting, if possible on the same day as per arrangement made earlier with them. It is advisable that the Registration Forms together with the returned exhibits be organized in the order of Frame No. to ease the workflow at site.

Day 4

- 1) Expert Group Team Leader shall finalize all paper work before noon. He shall hand over two copies of the reports (i.e. the Registration Forms) together with illustrations to the National Commissioners concerned (during the Commissioners Meeting) for onward transmission to the respective exhibitors and the FIP member federations where the exhibitors belong to. The Commissioners shall sign the third copy of the Registration Form and the illustration sheet to acknowledge the receipt. This is to ensure that the message is properly and effectively conveyed to the exhibitors.
- 2) The actions recommended by the Expert Group would need the consensus of the Jury. The Expert Group

Report incorporating the Group's recommendations shall be presented by reading out to the Jury in the afternoon of Day 4.

- 3) The Jury Presidium shall decide whether to put forward all or part of the Expert Group's recommendations for the Jury's consideration and approval. The results (awards) of all exhibits would then be tabled by the Jury Secretary, after having incorporated the Expert Group's recommendations, and having received the final approval of the Jury. The Jury Secretary shall present the Jury Report to the Jury. Both the Expert Group Report and the Jury Report will be published in the Palmares Awards Booklet.

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- 4) The Expert Group Team Leader shall, upon completion of the task, hand over the following to the said FIP Board Director:-
 - a. One copy of Expert Group Report duly signed by all the group members,
 - b. One set of all Registration Forms with coloured Illustration sheets attached,
 - c. One set of Registration Forms with black & white Illustration sheets attached, duly signed by the commissioners,
 - d. A CD-rom or thumb drive containing all the scanned items

Conclusion

- 1) The above is the standard operating procedure of the Expert Group for a 7-day exhibition and modification in terms of time frame may be made depending on the number of exhibits and days of the exhibition. Expert Group Team Leader may, in consultation with FIP Consultant, propose the necessary changes.
- 2) It should be emphasized that the main objective of the Expert Group is to guide, assist and protect the interest of the exhibitors who enjoy the great fun of exhibiting in the FIP world stamp exhibitions.

