

Report to ICF Members: Embracing Change for a Brighter Future in Paddlesport

Dear Members,

As we reflect on our journey since the last congress in Thailand two years ago, it is with great excitement that we share the significant advancements we have achieved as a federation. Our commitment to excellence and innovation in paddlesport has never been stronger, and we are set for further significant advancements over the next two years. This report is supplemented by the Fit for Future – Evolution strategic roadmap where you will find a comprehensive overview of the highlights and milestones we have accomplished since we last convened in 2022.

In alignment with our Fit for Future strategy, we have conducted a comprehensive review of our organisational structure to optimise our operations and maximise available resources. As facilitators of our sport, we all understand that our greatest asset is our people. For this reason it has been crucial to ensure we have the right balance of skills and personalities in our team as we navigate the challenges and opportunities presented to international sports federations today.

This transformative journey began at the start of the 2023 season with a significant restructuring aimed at creating a clear departmental structure and hierarchy. This evolution better equips us to meet the diverse needs and demands across our multi-discipline, multi-stakeholder environment. Pending congress approval, we will take the bold next step to evolve our structure in 2025 with three primary hubs that will be fully operational early next year: a headquarters in Budapest, Hungary, the Olympic Capital Office in Lausanne, and our Asian satellite office in Hangzhou, China. I would like to take a moment to express my thanks to each member of our team for their unwavering dedication and excellence in navigating these changes. Your openness and commitment to advancing our sport are the reasons we can confidently embrace these exciting next steps.

Here is an overview of our evolved team structure as it stands today:

- Richard Pettit (GBR) — Secretary General (September 2022)
- Alessia Cirillo (SUI) — Executive Office Assistant (July 2024)

Membership and Operations

The Membership and Operations Team has significantly enhanced member services

- Cyril Nivel (FRA) — Global Director of Operations (October 2024)
- Narelle Henderson (AUS) — Global Lead: Membership and Governance (Returned 50% from maternity cover January 2024)

Stakeholder Relations & Sustainable Development:

The Stakeholder Relations & Sustainable Development Team conducted more Training and Identification Programme (TIP) camps than ever and secured record Olympic Solidarity funding to support global sport development.

- Michel Alarcon (FRA) — Head of Sport Development & Games Operations (New position January 2023)
- Sebastian Cuattrin OLY (BRA) — Global Lead: Flatwater (New position January 2023)
- Thomas Rosset (FRA) — Global Lead: Whitewater (New position January 2023)

International Events:

Always moving forward

The Events Team successfully delivered 62 international events over the past two years

- Bálint Vékássy (HUN) — Global Director of Events (February 2023)
- Dávid Bugár (HUN) — Event Operations Manager (December 2022)
- Hoichan Kwon (KOR) — Event Operations Manager (New position January 2023)

Growth and Communications:

The growth and communications team has enhanced all audience figures in TV and digital as well as increased commercial revenue.

- Stuart Roach (GBR) — Global Director of Growth and Communications (January 2023)
- Geoff Berkeley (GBR) — Global Lead: Communications (December 2023)
- Adam Collins (GBR) — Global Lead: Digital Platforms and Social Content (New position March 2024)
- Ross Solly (AUS) — Global Lead: Editorial & Event Communications (New position January 2023)
- Guang Yang "Nicolas" (CHN) — Global Lead: International Relations & Distribution (November 2023)

Hangzhou Satellite Office

The recently established Hangzhou office is currently undertaking a recruitment drive while actively advancing our sustainability partnership with Alibaba.

- Chenglong Jin (CHN) Chief Representative
- Kina Yuxin Zhou (CHN) International Affairs Manager
- Qianbei Chen (CHN) Administrative Manager
- Vimal Sankar (IND) Global Lead: Editorial & Public Relations
- Yutao Li (CHN) Sustainability Intern

Paris 2024

The Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games were a resounding success for the ICF. We delivered sell-out crowds, innovative events, and record-breaking athlete performances. The introduction of Kayak Cross to the Olympic programme was a pivotal moment, attracting new audiences and showcasing our sport's dynamism. Our global digital campaign and targeted development programmes ensured widespread visibility and inclusivity.

Now that the dust has settled, it is important to reflect on the details of our success. For me, it was about vibrancy and flexibility in our approach, which fostered strong partnerships and allowed us to achieve more than the sum of our parts. A prime example is the implementation of an inclusive qualification process that, despite the challenging political environment, enabled five Individual Neutral Athletes (AINs) and four athletes from the IOC Refugee Team to compete at the Vaires-sur-Marne Nautical Stadium. With a quota of 422 athletes (323 Olympic and 99 Paralympic), our sport achieved representation from 62 nations, a testament to the global appeal and success of the qualification process. Furthermore, medals were awarded to athletes from 21 countries across five continents, highlighting the sport's diverse representation among the 16 Olympic and 10 Paralympic medals.

A historic milestone was reached with the first-ever ICF Canoe Sprint World Championship hosted on the Asian continent, showcasing the immense growth potential in the region. Events in Thailand and the Philippines, including the record-breaking 2024 SUP World Championship and Dragon Boat World Championship, underscore our expanding global presence.

We have made significant strides in refining our governance and organisational structure, culminating in our highest-ever score in the ASOIF International Federation Governance Review. This recognition highlights our commitment to transparency and accountability, values that remain central to our operations. Additionally, we have optimised our event bidding and qualification processes.

Always moving forward

Financially, we have enhanced our systems in collaboration with Deloitte, decreasing our reliance on IOC revenue by nearly half. This diversified income generation approach—through strategic partnerships, sponsorships, TV rights sales, and digital revenues—ensures the long-term sustainability of our activities. Our partnerships with industry leaders, such as Alibaba and Deloitte, have been invaluable. Alibaba is supporting our sustainability drive, while Deloitte supports our financial streamlining efforts, enhancing our operational capacity and strengthening our position within the Olympic Movement.

Our innovative digital streaming strategy has transformed audience engagement, enabling fans to access live and on-demand canoeing content more easily than ever before. Our broadcast strategy has significantly advanced, leading to a record number of live hours in 2023 and 2024, establishing a continued audience growth. I must highlight our partnership with the Chinese Media Group, which has elevated our sport's visibility in the world second most populous significantly expanding our audience reach.

Thanks and next steps

I extend my thanks to our President, Vice Presidents and Board of Directors. Your leadership, commitment, support and togetherness have enabled the ICF to navigate a challenging yet successful period with remarkable success.

I would also like to also express my gratitude to our member federations for their steadfast commitment to the ongoing growth of paddlesport. I encourage each of you to continue to engage actively in this exciting journey ahead.

As we look towards the future, we must continue to embrace change and innovation, ensuring that paddle sports remain relevant and inclusive. The evolving landscape presents numerous challenges, but with our newly restructured organisation, a dedicated team, and unwavering support from our member federations, I am confident we are well-prepared to seize the opportunities that lie ahead.

Let us unite in our commitment to foster a vibrant, diverse, and sustainable future for paddlesport globally. Together, we can ensure that our federation thrives and our sport continues to inspire and engage participants at all levels.

Thank you



Richard Pettit
ICF Secretary General