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**REPORT FOR THE XVII ORDINARY CONGRESS  
OF THE EUROPEAN CANOE ASSOCIATION  
BUDAPEST, HUNGARY 29 MARCH 2025**

Dear Présidents, Dear Secretary General, Dear Delegates, Dear friends,

After two years in office, this report is an opportunity for me to measure the work accomplished, the progress made, but also the road that remains to be covered. Indeed, these first two years were intense as the task that awaited us was immense. The commitment of everyone has enabled us to meet the challenges that awaited us to give new impetus to the ECA. Let's go through the different stages of the work carried out together.

**The elective congress in March 2023 in Chania, Crete – Greece**

The starting point for this report is the elective congress in March 2023. A congress that saw the election for the period 2023-2027 of new Board members: President: ZOUNGRANA Jean, Vice-President: JELENC Andrej, Board members: GAWEHN Manuela (GER), STANOJEVIC Jovana (SRB), KVILLUM Geir (NOR), Auditor: PETROVA Evelina (BUL), ECA representative in the ICF Board: JELENC Andrej (SLO), STANOJEVIC Jovana (SRB). Mr. Albert Woods has also been appointed Honorary Life President of the ECA. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the federations for the trust they have placed in me and to congratulate the various candidates on their election.

**Structuring and organising the functioning of the ECA**

The first task we set out to do was to structure and organise the functioning of the ECA. This led us to define an organization with a short and long-term vision with the establishment of an administrative communication and partnership department, a sports and events department. A development department will soon be added to this organization.

To make this organisation operational, we have also clarified the situation of the people employed by the ECA with remuneration and assignments validated by the Board, set up employment contracts and renewed the contract with the Croatian federation for the ECA headquarters. Mrs. Jovana Stanojevic has been confirmed as sports and event manager, Mrs. Nina Jelenc as communication and partnerships manager and finally Mrs. Ivana Sundov in her functions as administrative and development assistant.

The functioning of the Board has also evolved with more frequent online and face-to-face meetings. It is also the possibility of making decisions online for a more agile and modern governance. Thus, 13 Board meetings were organized, 6 of which were remote. A necessity given the magnitude of the task that awaited us. It is also more transparent with the publication of the minutes of the Board's meetings on the website and their distribution to our federations.

The establishment of the sports committee has made it possible to start coordinating the work of our technical committees.

Finally, it is also the organization of service meetings with the ECA staff and the secretary general to implement the decisions of the Board that has begun to be institutionalized.

### **IT tools**

To make our organization more efficient, we have equipped the ECA with IT tools - Microsoft Office 365, email addresses eca-canoe.eu - for elected officials to facilitate the work of the Board and committees for the organization of meetings, the sharing of documents, and the protection of data and digital documents.

### **The renovation of the ECA's governance of its development projects**

In order to provide the ECA with new statutes, a strategic development plan, and a sports project, working groups have been set up. 20 federations responded to our request and 95 applications were submitted. This participation was particularly encouraging and underlines the willingness of the federations to take part in the governance of the ECA.

The Board was required to set the composition of the working groups and the provisional timetable. A number of criteria were retained with the Technical Delegates to constitute these groups: The number of members limited to 6 to 7 members, gender equity, the number of representatives per national federation with only one representative per nation, the skills and experience of the candidates (Athlete / ITO / Position within the federation / Profession / Experience / ..), and finally the geographical criteria to cover the different areas of Europe. These working groups were supervised by members of the Board.

Unfortunately, we were not able to retain all the applications that were of great value to limit the number of members in order to facilitate the work, which is always a disappointment, and we would like to thank all the candidates and federations who have shown their interest.

The composition of these working groups was set on the occasion of the World Championships in Duisburg in August 2023. Subsequently, the work was marked by numerous meetings that extended until the extraordinary congress in Antalya in November 2024 where we were able to adopt the new statutes and the strategic development plan.

A framework was set for the various working groups to guide their work and kick-off meetings were held in September 2023.

I wanted this work to be done in conjunction with the federations and the Board. The Board, which is involved in the various groups, was also regularly informed of the progress of the various projects. Regarding collaboration with national federations, questionnaires have been carried out to collect their opinions and a face-to-face meeting was organised in June 2024 on the issue of the statutes. It should be noted that the response rate to the questionnaire was particularly satisfactory with 47 responses from 36 federations, i.e. a response rate of 76.5%.

### **The new statutes**

The statutes of the ECA had been drafted in 1993 and since then had undergone few changes. We had to take into account the needs of our federations and the aspirations of our societies for shared governance, more gender equity, but also the ECA's need for more modern and agile governance. The new statutes have marked a big step forward in gender equity, although there is still much work to be done to make it a reality. We will have the pleasure of electing a Vice-President at this congress for the first time, which is a historic moment for the ECA. It is also a more shared governance with committees that are more representative of our federations with 5 members. Finally, it is the statutes that have made it possible to give more clarity to the functioning of the ECA and greater efficiency and more modern governance using our digital tools at our disposal. We can collectively be proud of this work, even if we know that this work will have to continue to be carried out in order to continue to update these statutes in the light of our needs. I would like to highlight here the commitment of the working group and the skills of its members that have enabled us to carry out this work.

### **The strategic development plan.**

This strategic plan has allowed us to define the main orientations for the ECA with 5 main areas: the ECA as a continental federation, the Member Federations, events, high performance and high level and finally paddle sports for all. The work also focused on the ECA's economic model, its current situation and the levers on which to act to transform it. This guidance was lacking in the ECA. Adopted at the extraordinary congress, it is now up to the Board to operationalize this plan with concrete actions to achieve the objectives set. This is the purpose of the 2025-2026 development plan that will be submitted for your approval at this congress.

### **The sports program**

In the same way, the technical committees of each discipline were asked to define the development project of their discipline in connection with the ECA's strategic plan. This work led to a working paper presented at the Extraordinary General Assembly in Antalya. This document served as a support for the new committees set up in December 2024 so that the projects could be submitted for approval at the 2025 congress.

Indeed, in accordance with the ECA's statutes, new committees have been established. A call for applications was launched in November 2024 and in December and January we were able to set up our various committees. From 15 members, we will increase to 55 members at the end of the appointments and will gain in representation from our federations. It should be noted that while we have received a large number of applications for our Olympic disciplines, some disciplines have had difficulty in getting formed. Moreover, the gender equity we aspire to is still a goal that is often difficult to achieve. However, we are moving in the right direction, and it should be noted that these appointments were made by the Board by secret ballot to guarantee the regularity of the vote and the fairness of the candidates. We thank all candidates who have expressed interest in these positions.

### **Competitions and Events**

These two years were marked by the organisation of a number of major events. The details of these European Championships will be presented in the committees' report. I will therefore not present them exhaustively here. However, I would like to highlight in particular the European Sprint and Slalom Games held in Poland (2023) and for the first time the combined European Championships in Sprint, Paracanoe, SUP and the integration of events for athletes with mental disabilities (2024).

I would like to express my thanks to the organizers of all our major events.

We have also started to prepare for the 2027 European Games in Istanbul with a site visit in November 2024. It is also the assistance provided to the North Macedonia Federation in hosting the slalom events of the Youth Olympic Festival.

Regarding the 2026 European Multisport Championships, initially scheduled to take place in Hannover – Germany – and to our great regret, the organising committee has had to withdraw its bid given the political situation in the country. The organizers of this championship are now moving towards the organization of the 2030 championship.

### **The Olympic and Paralympic Games PARIS 2024**

The European continent hosted the Olympic and Paralympic Games for the first time. I will not be completely impartial in saying that these Games were an exceptional success.

All the canoe events were organised on the same site, the Olympic and Paralympic nautical centre in Vaires-Sur-Marne with its lake and artificial river for slalom and kayak cross.

For the first time, Kayak Cross was on the program. The organization was a real success with the public.

It was also the centenary of canoeing's presence at the Games. We were demonstrating at the Paris Games in 1924. It was also the centenary of the ICF that was celebrated on the occasion of these Games.

The French Canoe Federation inaugurated its new headquarters and hosted these various convivial moments.

Many personalities, presidents of the republic, prime ministers and dignitaries have visited us during these Games, which has contributed to the notoriety of our paddling sports.

I would like to congratulate all the federations and the athletes for the results achieved during these Games.

### **ECA's representation**

The presidency of the ECA has also led me to represent the ECA at the meetings of the ICF Board and Executive Committee or at the European Olympic Committee. It is also the relations with the other European and international federations. This mission of representation has led me to travel to about fifteen countries and sometimes several times to some of them - Azerbaijan, Hungary, North Macedonia, Poland, Slovakia, Portugal, Germany, Great Britain, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkiye, Romania, Switzerland, Montenegro, China.

### **Development**

We have been particularly involved in defining our new statutes and development plan. This is a prerequisite for the implementation of actions to achieve the desired objectives. However, several training camps have been organized in Slalom - North Macedonia - and Wildwater - Switzerland. The details of these actions will be presented as well as the development project.

### **ECA Headquarters**

A partnership between the ECA and the FFCK was concluded in November 2024 to host the ECA headquarters. This project represents a great opportunity for the ECA to benefit from offices close to the Olympic and Paralympic venues to develop its activities. Based on this contract, the Board decided on February 2025 to establish the ECA headquarters in France. However, at the time of writing this report, this contract is currently being reviewed by the FFCK and should be finalized for the congress.

The political will is also to establish remote ECA branches in partnership with national federations to implement the ECA development project. **Our partnerships**

This year was marked by the signing of the partnership with the company PESHEING. A company specialized in the production of carbon fiber materials, in particular canoes and dragon boats, and in general equipment for water sports. The company's headquarters are in Pudong, Shanghai, and has three production sites in Qiandaohu, Zhejiang, Dongtai, Jiangsu, Yuxi, Yunnan. It employs more than 500 employees, and has a large production capacity of more than 10000 boats per year. It also develops research activities with several universities. It should be noted that in canoeing they provided the slalom obstacles at the Beijing Games in 2008 and are the official suppliers of major events such as the Canoe Super Cup in Hangzhou. They were also suppliers of Dragon Boat for the demonstration at the PARIS 2024 Games. The agreement was signed during a visit to the company in September 2024. We invite our members to give this new partner a warm welcome. In the context of a globalised global economy, it is indeed important to build our partnerships on a global scale. This company is also in contact with Nelo, one of the largest European kayak production companies, with whom we had a meeting on the occasion of the European Championships in Szeged to discuss our partnership and share our visions for the organization of the European Championships. The 2025-2026 partnership agreements are currently being prepared.

### Conclusion

During these two years, a major work of structuring and organizing the ECA has been carried out. With its new statutes, its strategic development plan and its sports projects, the ECA now has all the tools to start implementing its orientations in 2025-2026 as part of the 2025-2026 project that will be presented to you.

Finally, this report cannot ignore the geopolitical situation in Europe with the war between Russia and Ukraine that began in 2022 and the war between Israel and Hamas. We hope that diplomatic channels will bring these conflicts to an early end. The populations are the first victims. The sports movement is also impacted. The ECA has applied the ICF regulations regarding the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes at the European Championships.

I will conclude by expressing my special gratitude for their long-standing investment in the ECA's bodies to our Secretary General Mr. Branko Lovric and our Vice-President Mr. Miroslav Havia. All my thanks to all the members of the Board, our technical delegates and the members of the working groups for their commitment during these two years, all of our federations and organizing committees for hosting our major events, the Portuguese federation for hosting a meeting of the ECA Board, the Turkish federation for hosting our extraordinary congress, and the ICF for its support without which our continental federations could not develop. Finally, all my thanks go to the Hungarian federation which is hosting our 2025 congress.

Jean Zoungrana  
ECA President

