





# ECA

# STRATEGIC PLAN

# SPORT PROGRAM

EUROPEAN  
CANOE ASSOCIATION



# SPORT PROGRAM

(CANOE SLALOM)



## PRESENT OUR DISCIPLINE

- History
- Main evolutions
- Definitions



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# HISTORY

- Canoe Slalom originated in Switzerland in 1933 as a summer alternative to slalom skiing.
- Initial competitions were on flatwater courses.
- Switzerland hosted the first World Championships in Geneva in 1949
- Slalom made its Olympic debut as an introduction sport at the 1972 Games in Munich. It was a further 20 years before Canoe Slalom returned to the Olympic Games, but this time as a core sport.
- The WC1 event made its debut at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, replacing the men's C2, which had been part of the Olympic programme in 1972 and then from 1992 until 2016.
- The decision to replace the men's C2 with the women's C1 for the 2020 Olympics was taken to ensure Canoe Slalom met the IOC's gender equity criteria.



## HISTORY - Successes

- Slovakia hold the record for most gold medals in Canoe Slalom at the Olympic Games with eight.
- The only three people to claim more than three Olympic medals all Slovakian
  - Michal Martikán (two gold, two silver, one bronze) MC1
  - Pavol and Peter Hochschorner (three gold and one bronze) MC2
- France has won the most world titles in Canoe Slalom (61)
- But combining Czechoslovakia (33), Czech Republic (30) and Slovakia (25) is more
- Martikan (15) has won the most world titles in the discipline (individual and team events), while the leading female is Jessica Fox (10) of Australia.
- A paddler representing Africa has never finished in the top-three at the World Championships, but in 2008 in Beijing, Benjamin Boukpeti claimed Togo's first medal in any sport at the Olympic Games when he took bronze in the MK1.



## Kayak Cross

- Kayak Cross is a combination of all canoeing's whitewater disciplines, with competitors racing in identical plastic boats.
- Athletes are ranked through an individual time trial to qualify for head-to-head knock out rounds. In 2025 the ICF followed ECA and made the time trial and Olympic event
- The race begins with a 2m ramp then Athletes need to negotiate both downstream and upstream gates, and contact is allowed. There's a compulsory 360°kayak roll.
- Most races are over in around a minute, but times are not important. Kayak Cross is very much a race of tactics, and often it does not pay to lead early.
- Kayak Cross first appeared on the ICF World Cup programme in 2015, and in the Olympics in 2024.
- Athlete numbers have been increasing every season, and more and more TV networks are showing the races live



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## Main Evolutions

- In the 1960's boat design has changed dramatically since the sports inception with canvas folding canoes replaced by fiberglass and now carbon fibre.
- In the 1960's canals began to be diverted from rivers to create dedicated man-made competition runs
- The Augsburg Eiskanal course that was used for the Munich Games was the first artificial whitewater course constructed and set the blueprint for modern day competition courses.
- C2s started with the paddlers having to be close to the end of the boat, but this was relaxed in the 1980s allowing the close cockpit C2s seen today.
- The first European Canoe Slalom Championships was held in Augsburg in 1996
- This season the progressions in slalom changed to only allow a single heats run.





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## Definitions

- Canoe Slalom is a race against the clock through a combination of up and downstream gates on a whitewater course.
- The course length and number of gates varies with a maximum of 25 gates for canoe and kayak events and eight gates for Kayak Cross.
- The course is set with a mix of upstream and downstream gates;.
- The direction the athlete must travel through each gate is indicated by colour: red for upstream and green for downstream.
- Course designers set the gate patterns with the aim of utilising the water features - eddies, waves and stoppers - to create a competitive course. No two courses are the same.
- There are five events within international canoe and kayak competitions with both men and women contesting the kayak and canoe singles (WK1, MK1, WC1, MC1);. Kayak Cross programme consists of women's kayak (WX1) and men's kayak cross (MX1).

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# THE DIAGNOSTIC OF THE DISCIPLINE

## **SWOT ANALYSIS**

- STRENGTHS
- WEAKNESSES
- OPPORTUNITIES
- THREATS

# DIAGNOSTIC

## Areas of reflections

### ➤ Important evolution in the discipline

The major changes in progression has a major effect on the race. We need to understand the impact of this on lower ranked nations and paddlers.

### ➤ Analyse our European championships

The Senior Championships are a well-respected event, acknowledge for several years to be of a high World level standard to be used for Olympic Quota selection.

The Junior / Under 23 Championships are seen more as approving ground for athletes and officials. The standard off all remains high. There are significant challenges in completing a full program in the current number of competition days.

### ➤ Competition venues

17 venues have held the Senior Championships, 12 venues have hosted the age group championships. But only 19 sites in total. With Krakow (9) the most often.

There is an obvious challenge to try to use new venues, (or reuse ones not used for a long time).

## Areas of reflections

### ➤ Organizing countries

Only 13 countries have hosted the European Championships at any level. At least one NF has reported that the costs are very high, with little state support for the competition.

### ➤ Judges and officials

European Judges and Officials continue to provide the majority at World events. Within the Championship, there is a significant number who are not nominated for ECA events as they use all their time at ICF events. Which are seen as more prestigious.

ECA events are seen as an opportunity for officials to explore the roles with less stress than ICF events so there is a good mix of new and experienced officials nominated

### ➤ The calendar

The World-wide slalom calendar is very full, with World Championships, European Championships and World Cups all vying for slots.

Around this there are many ICF ranking races also offering competition opportunities, normally at a 'non-team' level

# DIAGNOSTIC

## ➤ The economic model of organizing events

Significant state or city sponsorship is normally required to run a Championship. Full information is not available as budgets for the championships have not so far been requested.

The lack of applications for next, and future years is of significant concern and is probably affected by the poor economic model for events.

## ➤ The hosting fees of the events

There are currently no hosting fees charged. There is concern that any hosting fee will further deter applications

## ➤ The television and streaming broadcast - production, audience

The actual figures are not known, but there seems to be a market for video of the senior Championships. The costs of this are increasing as the size of the team to produce the video is now larger than the sport team and costs associated with housing and feeding them are larger.

Streaming of Championships is normally undertaken and popular except when blocked for TV rights sales.

## ➤ The contractualization between the ECA and the organizer

For Championships the contract between the two needs review and simplification. The current contract covers several areas several times and could be better understood if separated into a contract body – probably similar for all Championships with specific appendixes for the sport and the state of TV licence sales. E.g. a slalom appendix, an appendix detailing what is to be provided by a Host Broadcaster (not how).

For Cup competitions, the results of ICF ranking races are used to provide the ranking. The Open Cup seems to work well, but further work is needed for the ECA Junior Cup where the organisation seems to have devolved to a separate group.

# DIAGNOSTIC

## Areas of reflections

### ➤ Gender equity

Once past the Heats phase, equal numbers of athletes progress to the later stages. In the first stage, in common with ICF, and most nations, there are more men entering than women.

The gender mix of International Technical Officials is reviewed in the allocation process. The mix is planned to include both genders but to select the best official for the position.

The technical committee has both genders represented

### ➤ The specifications of the Championships

The Championship requirements are not clearly specified. It is known that it is 'like a World Cup' but not specified. The requirements are in several parts of the contract, but could be profitably extracted to provide a reference for those bidding for a Championships

### ➤ The event attribution process

Bidding for future events is so sparse that event attribution is rarely needed. No independent review process is currently known.

The bid process should be extended to include a budget and a series of measurements that can be compare, such as Kayak Cross ramp mechanism, Water level control etc.

### ➤ The link with other disciplines – calendar, multisport events

Slalom was successfully included in the European Games in Krakow. Further opportunities to be included should be pursued

Slalom is included in EYOF, this should be pursued for future years.

Slalom events have been held with Freestyle and White-water racing. If the economics of a combined Championship work, then this should be encouraged.

# DIAGNOSTIC

## ➤ The competition program

A major area of change this year with the ICF changing the progression system and the number of rounds. This will be monitored this season and a review undertaken to understand the effectiveness and weaknesses of the current approach.

The Championships are shorter than the comparable ICF Championships so there is an issue in fitting all the required heats into the competition period. Need to consider (and discuss with organisers) extending the duration or look at reducing the number of events.

## ➤ The discipline's training tools for coaches, judges, organizers and volunteers

The ICF tools are all that is available. Goal to produce further technical instructions, simplify the current ones, create video and other online material as guidance

## ➤ The link with the ICF

There is no formal link. Informal link due to previous Technical committee membership. A concern for future ICF sport evolution.

## ➤ The link with the member federations

Outside competition this is very weak and should be developed.

## ➤ The impact of global warming on the discipline

Competitions are more often held on pumped courses, with negative affects on global warming. Need to encourage bids from greener sites. The Junior/Under 23 Championships 'slot' in the Slalom Calendar is in August so the possibilities of high humidity and temperatures must be borne in mind to minimize medical impacts

# CANOE SLALOM / KAYAK CROSSSTRATEGIC ANALYSIS

## STRENGTHS

- Well developed, Olympic, discipline
- Well organised competitions
- Well organised and experienced ITOs
- Number of paddlers, number of nations
- ECA slalom junior cup
- Attractive for spectators (slalom and kayak cross)
- Number of venues in Europe

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Introduce European Ranking extracted from World Ranking
- Strong appetite for a Masters competition among paddlers
- Appeal of Kayak Cross to general public
- Development program- TIP
- Coaches and ITO/NTO training and education

## WEAKNESSES

- Crowded International Calendar in Europe
- Non-transparent Bidding process
- Non constant communication with ICF
- Different levels of organisation and TV broadcast
- Lack of new organisers and Federations, always the same
- Gender equity in entries
- Long competition days

## THREATS

- The number of Host organisers/Bidders are decreasing
- Costs increasing for Host organisers constantly
- Human resources (lack of volunteers)
- ECA fundings / no support to organisers and NF's
- Operational costs of artificial venues
- Climate change / floods or problems with the water in the summer

# THE MAIN AXIS OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISCIPLINE

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**How can we  
affect the  
Global  
Development  
of the  
discipline?**



# DEVELOPMENT

## GLOBALLY DEVELOP OUR DISCIPLINE

### OUR PRIORITIES

- Increase the attractiveness of hosting Championships, clarifying the requirements and streamlining the process
- Maintain the number of nations taking part in slalom in general, and specifically in Championships and cups
- Expand Canoe Slalom to other nations
- Raise level of and quality of judging / becoming more consistent
- Establish clear process of ITO's and course designer nomination
- Motivate ex slalom athletes to become ITO's
- Develop tools to help organisers of the competitions
- Develop support and awareness of Kayak Cross
- Develop a more sustainable competition program
- Support experienced organisers but introduce new ones
- With ICF, develop education for coaches, ITOs, Organisers and volunteers
- Develop European ranking as a subset of Global ranking
- Maintain good viewing numbers and good TV broadcast
- Enhance communication with NFs, National teams, Coaches, Athletes, ITOs, organisers
- Seek Funding for TIP type development initiative

### OUR ACTIONS

- Approach all organisers and their venues, identify where the support is most needed and explore ways of assisting
- Organise special training for ITO's before and during the competition season
- Organise campaigns on social media to motivate ex slalom athletes to apply for ITO's courses and exams
- Organise workshops for organisers of slalom competitions, possibly including observer roles at Championships or World events.
- Review and improve the process for ITO nomination
- Create educational tools – online seminars – video material for athletes, coaches, team leaders, ITOs, organisers
- Story-telling: develop stories about our athletes – make them the stars, coaches, ITOs, volunteers, organisers – people are the most important!
- Extract and publish European rankings from ICF ranking.
- Develop proper more direct communication channels with all groups to include their opinion
- Prepare training for coaches in smaller nations to reduce the barriers to competition.



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## EVENTS AND CALENDAR

**HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF  
OUR EVENTS AND CALENDARS ?**

# EVENTS AND CALENDAR

## IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF OUR EVENTS AND CALENDAR

### STRENGTHS

- Expected periods in Global Calendar for ECA Championships
- Some strong, experienced organisers for Championships
- Good co-operation for cup races
- Good Media coverage

### WEAKNESSES

- Too much to put into every Championship day
- For TV, finals clash with higher profile sports (e.g. Football/ Ice Hockey)
- European Cup needs to use ICF Ranking races.
- Junior ECA Cup organisation needs clarification
- Broadcast costs for Championships continue to grow.
- Bidding process for Championships is unclear, and few future Championships are being requested
- Events are expensive to run
- TV costs and personnel increasing

### ACTIONS

- Prepare competition manual for different levels of competitions
- Prepare guidance for Allocating ECA Cup races, and or get a bidding process set up
- Set up meetings with Junior Cup organisers to clarify the way forward
- Clarify the bidding process and encourage bids for 2027 onwards
- Identify future locations for Masters Championships and encourage applications
- Encourage low climate impact event organisation

### GUIDELINES

- Consolidate our presence at the Olympic, Paralympic and European Game and the major international events
- Consolidate our international leadership in terms of our results
- Aim for excellence in the organization and media coverage of our events - European Championships - Continental Qualifications and generate more revenues from our events
- Develop the number of nations and athletes in our competitions
- Strengthen cooperation between nations, transborder cooperation
- Reinforce the accessibility of our competitions for people with disabilities and develop the paracanoe

- Define a clear and transparent application and event allocation process that better associates the technical delegates and the authorities.
- Develop events and activities that generate partnerships and revenue.
- Reduce the impact of our competitions on our environment and biodiversity by gradually introducing sustainable development criteria into the awarding of our events.
- Participate in the development of e-sport
- Build the paddle sports of tomorrow
- Develop the cooperation with the other disciplines – e.g. multisport events -



## VENUES & EQUIPMENTS

**HOW TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY, DIVERSITY,  
AND SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR VENUES?**

# VENUES & EQUIPMENT

## DEVELOP THE PLACES TO PADDLE FOR OUR DISCIPLINE

### **OUR PRIORITIES**

- Find venues with lower environmental impacts
- More races in more venues across Europe. This includes bringing in new venues and working to regain access to venues that have been lost over the last 20 years
- Spread the number of sites that can run ECA Championships
- Work to have support multi discipline Championship events

### **ACTIONS**

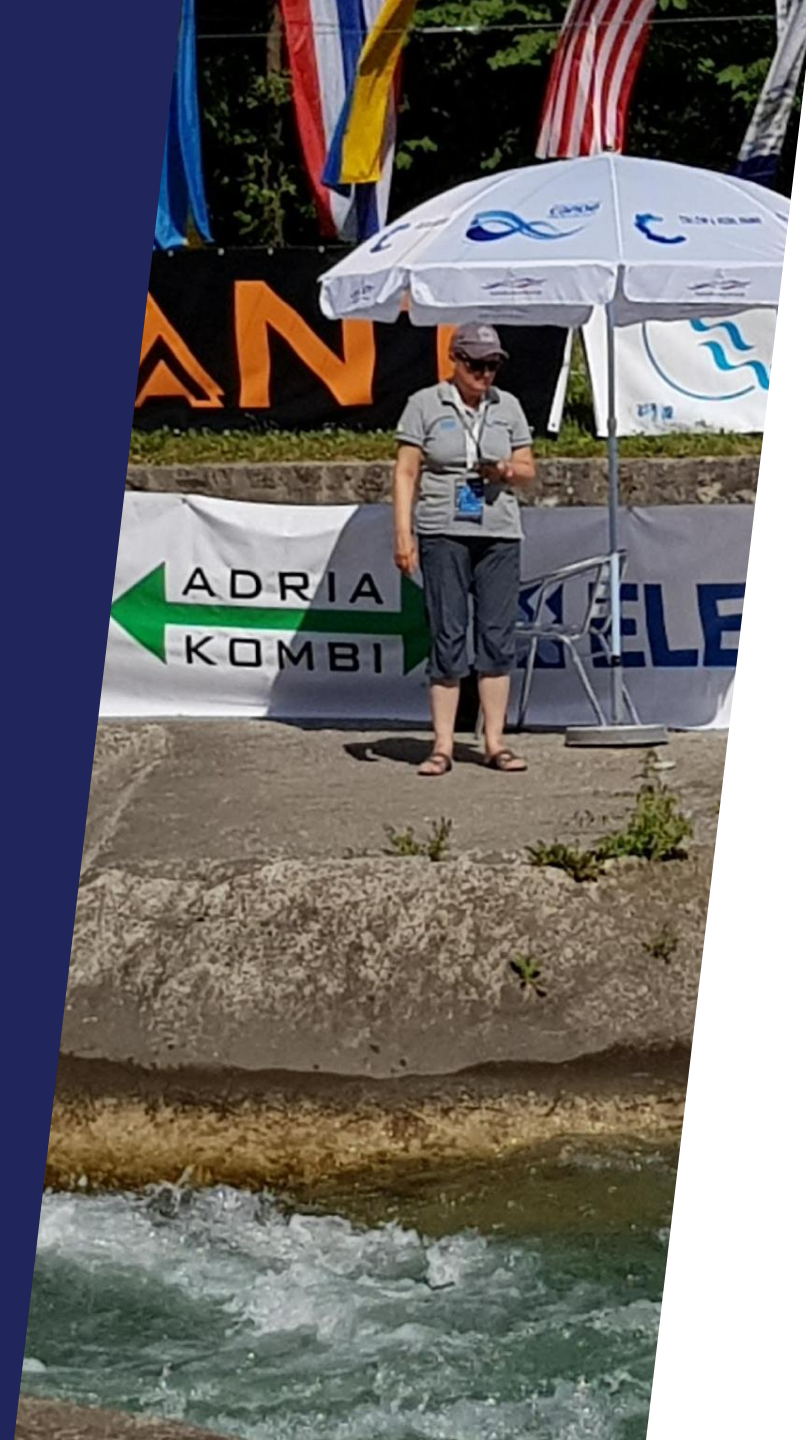
- Identify and implement guidelines for suitable sites for each level of ECA competition
- Include sustainability in bid evaluation
- Get feedback from athletes, clubs and national federations on potential new and reactivated venues for investigation - are they going to be able to organise events there?
- Brainstorm the impacts and amelioration of global warming measures
- Find new possible venues in development countries
- Support multi discipline organisers

### **Our strengths**

- Using the artificial water courses
- Benefits local areas thanks to sport tourism
- ECA Open Cup 'piggy backing' on ICF Ranking races
- The concept of ECA Juniors Cup as applicable to more sites.

### **Our Weaknesses**

- Climate change leading to drought (low water) or flood race disruptions
- Reliance on pumped courses
- Heavy reliance on 'homologated' race equipment and venues.



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ATHLETES-JUDGES-OFFICIALS-COACHES-  
VOLUNTERS- ORGANISERS

**HOW IMPROVE THE NUMBER, THE SKILLS  
OF OUR ACTIVE COMMUNITY MEMBERS?**

**HOW VALORIZE AND PROMOTE OUR  
COMMUNITY MEMBERS?**

# ATHLETES-JUDGES-OFFICIALS-COACHES- VOLUNTERS- ORGANISERS

KEEP PEOPLE IN THE CENTRE OF OUR PROJECTS

## **OUR PRIORITIES**

- Increase the pool of possible event organisers
- Increase image of ECA ITO appointments
- Continue to remove barriers between teams/paddler and officials

## **ACTIONS**

- Brainstorm support for new Organisers
- Review the provision of uniform to ITOs

## **Our strengths**

- .Large pool of ICF qualified ITOs
- ECA races seen as good development route for ITOs
- Good progress on the image of judging with teams

## **Our Weaknesses**

- Olympic discipline increases the pressure between the paid and the volunteer
- Small number of people willing to organise races
- 'Use and throw' uniform for ITOs,
- Image of officials trying to find fault, not being fair to all (e.g. is hair hitting a pole, but not moving it, really a penalty).



## RULES & REGULATIONS

**WHAT DO WE NEED TO KEEP, CHANGE,  
ADAPT IN A SHORT, MEDIUM, LONG  
TERM, WHY AND HOW?**



# RULES AND REGULATIONS

## IMPROVE OUR RULES AND REGULATIONS

### **STRENGTHS**

- To date worked well with ICF Slalom Committee to keep technical rules in line
- International Technical Rules work well for ECA
- ICF-ECA Rules differences document produced. Mainly references ECA/ICF structural differences (i.e. must be a member of ECA, not just ICF)

### **WEAKNESSES**

- No longer any direct contact with, or involvement in, the ICF Slalom Committee
- ICF Rules reference an Appendix and various supporting documents. There are no ECA equivalents.

### **ACTIONS**

- Find some way for an ECA observer at the ICF Canoe slalom committee
- Review the ICF supporting documents, and either reference directly, or create ECA version
- Review each change in ICF CSL rules to identify impacts and relevance to ECA Rules



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# MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE ECA

**HOW TO IMPROVE OUR COMMITTEE  
ORGANISATION AND ADAPT IT TO WHAT  
WE PLAN TO DO?**

# MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE ECA

## ORGANISATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

### **OUR PRIORITIES**

- Get stability in the technical committee. By selecting a supported Technical Chair
- Develop a clear statement of the roles and responsibilities of the Technical Chair
- Develop roles and responsibilities in ECA Slalom Committee
- Increase cross committee co-operation in ECA
- Include sustainability and educate participants (athletes, coaches, ITOS and organisers)

### **ACTIONS**

- Olympic discipline Technical chairs to have an observer role on ECA board
- Push for ECA Chair observer role on ICF CSL
- Individuals in CSL Committee taking clear roles and responsibilities

### **Our strengths**

- The volunteers who have supported ECA CSL for the previous cycle

### **Our Weaknesses**

- ECA CSL has not had a committee, just a chair and two individuals
- Tendency for volunteers to be overloaded.
- Not an NF priority



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# ACTION PLANNING

**HOW TO PLAN OUR ACTIONS 2025-2028?**

# ACTION PLANNING

## 2025

- Complete development of this Sport Program
- Consolidate Technical Committee and define all roles, responsibilities and duties of Technical delegate and each member
- Increase Championship bidding process
- Understand / confirm ECA Junior Cup Organisation
- Update existing event documents
- Publish ECA rankings based on ICF rankings
- Prepare 2026 Cup plans
- Plan/Prepare for Masters Championships
- Prepare plan for coach training

## 2026

- Standardise contracts for 2027 on Championships
- Start to develop pathway for Athletes to other roles (ITO/Organiser)
- Review Competition Rules to coordinate with ICF CSL Committee
- Develop European Education programs
- Event sustainability plans
- Develop 'Story telling' publicity
- Implement Coach Training

## 2027

- Develop pathway for Athletes to other roles (ITO/Organiser)
- Commence Review of Sport Program for next Olympic cycle

## 2028

- Finalise 2029-2032 Sport Program
- Review Technical Committee roles to support the new plan

