





ECA

STRATEGIC PLAN

SPORT PROGRAM

EUROPEAN
CANOE ASSOCIATION



SPORT PROGRAM

(Ocean Racing)



Ocean Racing

- **History**

The roots of Surfski lie in Surf lifesaving. Surfski started in the format and modified ILS Skis craft we recognise today in South Africa with offshore racing starting in the 1970's.

The first surfski races took place in the early 1980s. Surfski racing is a form of canoeing in which athletes compete in long, narrow kayaks with open seats on the open sea or in large bodies of water.

- **Main evolutions**

Material and design of canoes has improved towards higher performance

Event and competition has become more international and more professional athletes are competing

Rise of popularity not only in established countries like NZ, AUS, USA but also in Europe and Asia

All technology that comes with it like tracking-devices, drone-filming, live-tracking, big-screen for spectators

- **Definition**

The emphasis will be on testing the athletes' abilities to use challenging conditions to their advantage to be the fastest over the course.

INTRODUCTION

- Surfski races are competitions in which athletes compete against each other in long, narrow kayaks with open seats, known as surfskis. These races often take place on the open sea, in coastal waters or in large inland waterways and require participants to use a combination of paddling technique, endurance and wave reading.
- The races can take various formats, including sprint races over short distances, long-distance races over several kilometres or endurance races that can last hours or even days. The course can vary depending on the event and can include set courses as well as races along coastlines or between islands if ever possible downwind.
- Surfski races offer a variety of challenges, including manoeuvring through waves, taking advantage of currents and tides and coping with wind and weather conditions. These competitions therefore require not only physical fitness, but also tactical skill and strategic thinking.
- Surfski racing has become a popular and competitive discipline in canoeing and is enjoyed by athletes around the world both as individual races and as part of championships and series.
- Surfskis are also often used by former sprint athletes because of the slightly more stable water position compared to sprint boats.



THE DIAGNOSTIC OF THE DISCIPLINE

SWOT ANALYSIS

- STRENGTHS
- WEAKNESSES
- OPPORTUNITIES
- THREATS

DIAGNOSTIC

Areas of reflections

- Important evolution in the discipline
- Analyse our European championship
- competition venues
- Organizing countries
- Judges and officials
- The calendar
- The economic model of organizing events
- The hosting fees of the events
- The television and streaming broadcast - production, audience -
- The contractualization between the ECA and the organizer
- Gender equity
- The specifications of the events
- The event attribution process
- The link with other disciplines – calendar, multisports events -
 - The competition program
 - The discipline's training tools for coaches, judges, organizers and volunteers
 - The link with the ICF
 - The link with the member federations
 - The material used
 - The impact of global warming on the discipline
 - The link with leisure practices
 - etc

STRENGTHS

- Championship open to all , paddlers carry on after sprint of white water carrier
- One start line and open to all athletes (with quota for first line) para's can use same crafts, race at the same time the same course
- Number of referents all around Europe (GBR, ITA, ESP, FRA, GER, SWE, DEN...)
- Number of nation present on the ECA OCR Championship (between 7 to 16 depending on the event)
- Mass start for the show, welcomes mixed abilities, no restriction on numbers
- Good amount of well established surfski events and equipment manufactors
- Growing racing disipline with high standard of athletes
- Beachsport with « redbull-effect » globally popular
- Only little infrastructure needed
- Easy to organize
- European coastline gives many options
- Well established kit and safety manufactors
- Event can take place offshore, coastal, big rivers, lakes

OPPORTUNITIES

- Potential candidate for ECA OCR championship (SWE on the start line for example) Racing-Series planned
- kilometers of coastline to have races
- Number of surfski center : it will be usefull to idenfity all of them
- Development of shape for beginners (too heavy though)
- New sport, growing sport, attractive to younger, older, ex racers
- Gender free – same course, gear
- Top athletes from other disciplines like marathon and surf-life-saving
- GPS tracking can make sport with coverage very interessting
- Promotes healthy ocean and athletes
- Have new race-forms to attract spectators
- Provide boats from different manufacturers for rent at the races
- Get attention with some crazy race like « around an island like Corsica »
- The racing in waves has fun-factor

WEAKNESSES

- European championship too often on island. Not always easy to go on
- Flexible dates : maybe keeping the same period could be better for everyone's calendar
- Each event is « constructed » for its own needs from scratch
- few referees, few organisers
- security requirements different from event to event (to be standardized)
- Few nations participating, few financial help for non olympic discipline
- application form not online (to be standardized)
- Summer sport for many countries with strong OC-community
- ECA very weak in OR, poor perception amongst athletes
- High cost of rescue-boats, IRB, jetski
- ICF + ECA lack of support and understanding of this discipline
- Lack of sponsorship, lack of reconition of athletes
- Lack of european series, officials, promotion by ECA, media coverage

THREATS

- irregularity of media coverage of events
- Development of boat-shape for children still missing
- low arrival of new riders to this discipline
- regulation and access to beaches becomes more complicated
- procedure for the validation of applications is not clear enough yet
- Holding ECA OR events on places where athletes must travel on high costs
- ECA not listening to NF-Managers (so far...)
- Lack of a standardised performance mandate for the organizer of races
- Perceived danger, can go wrong very quickly
- Loosing importance with countries not participating
- Many national managers are waiting for help/development from ECA



THE MAIN AXIS OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISCIPLINE

HOW DEVELOP GLOBALLY THE DISCIPLINE ?

Easy to organize

Race and fun in one event

Attractive Prices

Canoe-Happening vs Pro-Race

DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOP GLOBALLY OUR DISCIPLINES

OUR PRIORITIES

- Find potential organisers who already have experience in the OR discipline
- Offer help with the organisation of the event
- Communicate help and the wider sporting offer for OR races
- Make an offer for ITO training
- Continuously ask all participants/stake-holders for potential improvements
- Find new athletes within canoeing
- Find new athletes outside canoeing (SUP, Surf-Life-Saving, Surfing)
- Find sponsorship for short and longterm
- Open up Ocean Racing to be a Multi-Paddle sport-craft event (SUP, Foiling, Seakayaks)
- Make Para to an official discipline (no extra course)
- Change official Race-Program to have the SS2-mixed the 2nd day
- Use ICF ITO-Training Programm

ACTIONS

- Building a step-by-step guide to organising an OR event
- Offer contact for event management
- ITO training could take place online or at canoe events within the overall event
- Enquire with all canoe manufacturers for ideas to better develop the sport
- Contact former top-paddlers from other disciplines
- Spread well made media
- Important to keep a strong link to Surf Lifesaving for availability of safety craft / race organisers / beach permissions and athletes (the majority of world top OR athletes' men & women have a SLS background)

Our strengths

- Paddle in some wonderful environment
- Easy to organize with step-by-step template
- Race-Calendar provided on website
- Disclaimer as template from ECA

Our Weaknesses

- No cash-budget
- Amateur auxiliary staff
- No possibilities to demand commitments for participation from national associations

Areas of reflection

- Number of nations / athletes / ITO / in the European championships
- The organization of the discipline in the national federations: number of nations, , clubs, athletes, national events, geographical analysis
- Obstacles to the development of activity within clubs, federations, ECA, ICF
- The budget allocated by the national federations to the discipline
- The tools for judges, officials, referees, volunteers, organizers
- The link with the other disciplines
- The economic model of the discipline
- ...

GUIDELINES

- Develop the number of nation represented in our championships, number of athletes, ITO, Officials, referees.
- Develop the discipline within our national federations – program of local, national competitions, national championships
- Promote our discipline – communication –
- Reinforce the link between the member of the community members of the discipline

➤ All members of the expert group have complained about the lack of support from ECA. If the central body lacks the resources, growth and development must come from within. In order to get more participants at the events, we have to make sure that the events are not designed too much for specialists. There must also be room for amateur sportsmen and women who are primarily looking for a trip in the open sea with safety boats.



EVENTS AND CALENDAR

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

EVENTS AND CALENDAR

Our strengths

- Own website with calendar
- Central contact point for all events and disciplines

Our Weaknesses

- Website design and function
- Information on website not complete or not existing for political reasons

Areas of reflection

- The calendar – number of events, locations - planification
- The link with the other disciplines and ICF calendar.- Optimization of the calendar
- The bidding process
- The hosting fees and the economic model of our events
- How cut costs and increase revenues
- The quality of the events
- The evaluation of the events – reports
- The program of the competitions
- Innovating program and paddle sports of tomorrow
- The broadcasting and streaming of the events
- The sponsors and partners
- Link with recreational activities

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF OUR EVENTS AND CALENDAR

- If someone is interested in an OR race, they should be able to find all races in Europe on our website. ECA must provide a disclaimer for each event stating that ECA is only providing this information and is not involved in or supervising the event.
- Events being published on the ECA-website shall be scalable by the organizer from regional, to national, to international and European championship
- The “step by step” instructions are structured in such a way that for smaller events a part can simply be omitted or reduced in size, e.g. for an international race, no ECA officials have to be invited at the organiser's expense
- The bidding process should be captured with an online application
- Make Races attractive to more paddlers than only pro's (it could be a good fun downwind-event with security and transport to many paddlers who aren't at the event primary to race but to use the occasion as non-racer)
- Use large canoe-events for promotion (nelo challenge, vogalonga, marathon)

ACTIONS

- Listing of all events with disclaimer
- Creation of scalable organisational guidelines
- Setup of online processes
- The event-description shall be more open to all

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 – eg multisport events -



VENUES & EQUIPMENTS

**HOW IMPROVE THE QUALITY, DIVERSITY,
OF OUR VENUES?**

VENUES & EQUIPMENTS

DEVELOP THE PLACES TO PADDLE FOR OUR DISCIPLINE

Our strengths

- Outdoor-sport and only if the weather is really bad no race can be held
- OR is easy to organize
- Not much infrastructure or complicated technical equipment needed

Our Weaknesses

- Few venues to host our events
- Boat transport is expensive
- To travel all Europe, some budget is needed
- Will to race of many paddlers

Areas of reflection

- The location of the venues in Europe
- The quality of the venue
- Label the venue according to its quality -- e.g.: 1 to 5 stars –
- The support by ECA to the national projects
- How to develop new venues
- How accompany the federation in the creation of new venues
- Assist the federation for the construction of new venues
- The specifications for the venues to host a championship
- Etc.

OUR PRIORITIES

- Find organizers of existing races to become part of the ECA challenge
- Find new venues and organizers to have more OR races to choose from
- Make sure, guidelines are followed, adapt rules for smaller races
- Find solution for affordable prices to rent boats at the venue
- Concerning all input from working-group-members, the next championship shall be on the mainland of Europe

ACTIONS

- Contact race organizers
- Get information from the working group for good venues
- Sailing-races are using it for a long time (tracking-system)

GUIDELINES

- Increase the number of sites and nations capable of hosting European championships
- Define an infrastructure and equipment plan and implement a support policy: political, technical, legal for project leaders - Project assistance on opportunity studies -
- Identify and promote the venues
- Improve the quality of the venues
- Define specifications for the sites hosting our championships
- Carry out a map of the sites hosting our championships
- Take global warming and environmental protection issues into account for our competition venues and the organization of our competitions
- Support the projects of national federations
- Facilitate the cooperation between nation – share the venues and organizations -



**ATHLETES-JUDGES-REFEREES-OFFICIALS-
COACHES-VOLUNTERS- ORGANIZERS**

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

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

ATHLETES-JUDGES-REFEREES-OFFICIALS-COACHES-VOLUNTERS- ORGANIZERS

THE JUDGES-REFEREES-OFFICIALS-COACHES-ATHLETES –VOLUNTERS - ORGANIZERS - AT THE CENTER OF OUR PROJECTS

OUR PRIORITIES

- Make process to become judge or official less complicated
- Don't make it a NF-thing
- Offer training and test in the same periods each year
- Offer coach-training for all NF (to be correct.. Offer those courses to club-trainers so the NF can profit)
- Make ECA important and useful to NF
- Use ICF infrastructure for ITO training and certification

ACTIONS

- Make training and testing each year (online or onsite)
- Have Polo-Shirt with ECA Logo for each Event
- Organize coach-training with coaches from other spots for example
- Create bonus-programm for having more athletes than last year on races (or for having more women at the races)

Our strengths

- Certain privilege come with the function
- Experts in what they do
- Volontiers, no professionals

Our Weaknesses

- Non professionals
- To complicated to become judge (why do you need the allowance from NF?)

Areas of reflection

- The courses for our coaches, referees, judges, organizers
- The observer program in the organization of our competitions
- European judges committee
- How to show recognition to our community members
- How to improve the skills of our community members?
- The link with ICF programs – eg TIP – clothing line for the officials, judges, volunteers, organizers
- How to confort the link between the members of our community
- Training tools for our stakeholders – eg europaddle pass –
- The ITO'S nomination
- Athletes ambassadors
- ...

GUIDELINES

- Improve the skills and knowledge of our judges, coaches, athletes, organizers and volunteers
- Promote the stakeholders of our community – medal ceremony, recognitions –
- Develop the cooperation between the nations for the athletes for high performance and development – training camps / competitions / Talent Identification Program –
- Identify our community members and reinforce the links between the members of our community

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RULES & REGULATIONS

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

RULES & REGULATIONS

Our strengths

- Rules are clear and short in definition
- Leaves enough room for event organizers to find best solution
- Awareness of travelling different countries

Our Weaknesses

- Many organizers are not familiar with the rules
- To set rules there should be some good reason or power to enforce them (the one that follows rules must agree and be convinced)
- ..

Areas of reflection

- Carry out an assessment of our rules
- what developments to consider for the discipline in the short, medium, long term
- what strategy to change the rules if necessary
- How make our discipline more attractive
- How to create the conditions to be more innovative

IMPROVE OUR RULES AND REGULATIONS

OUR PRIORITIES

- Have own ECA rules other than referring on ICF (even if it's the same)
- Motivate to follow our rules
- Ask and motivate for new formats
- Adapt rules for Europe
- Adapt rules for smaller races
- Make sure delegates are equipped with duties, rights and power to decide

ACTIONS

- Copy and paste ICF rules and make them ECA-Rules
- Make workshops for potential organizers to teach them how to use the rule-book
- Make sure the races are within ECA rules by creating stickers for boat-control, PSE
- Certain rules like over-all-winner must be communicated properly or deleted
- Not only downwind-races but also triangle, or even around island or landmark
- Make rules scalable for smaller races
- Jobdescription of all staff

GUIDELINES

- Identify what to keep, what needs to be changed, what needs to evolve
- Identify the changes to be made in the short term, medium term and long term
- Associate the national federations and their committees in the reflection
- Propose a strategy to change the rules
- The calendar – march 2025 -



MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE ECA

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

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE ECA

Our strengths

- Skills of the technical delegates ☺
- People working for the good of ECA

Our Weaknesses

- Lack of job description

Areas of reflection

- The duties of the chairman and the technical delegates members of the committee
- The link with: ICF committees / the other committees / The board
- The organisation and the functioning of the committees
- The communication
- The relations with the other federations, the national committees and the chairman of the disciplines of the national federations

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMITTEE

OUR PRIORITIES

- Create job description for each function
- Clean-up website, adjust functions
- Establish inside event-organisation-committee or make contract with external event-company

ACTIONS

- Description of each function with rights, duties, competences
- Description of application and elections

GUIDELINES

- A more shared governance, gender equity, transparency eg: publication of the reports –
- A structured organization – roles and missions defined -
- An organization and functioning mindful on its economic impact on member federations and organizers.
- An organization and functioning mindful of the impact of its activities on the environment, biodiversity and global warming
- A modern administration



ACTION PLANNING

HOW TO PLAN OUR ACTIONS 2025-2028?

ACTION PLANNING

2025

- Start with Euro-Challenge
- 5 Races with final in Oktober
- Try to find boat-rental-partner
- ESP, POR, GBR, SWE, GER, FRA, DEN, ITA to have at least one international race

2026

- European Championship
- Euro-Challenge + 20% more participants
- New race format as international race

2027

- Euro-Challenge 15% more participants

2028

- European championship

