

Report for XL ICF Congress Antalya, Turkiye, November 2024

Dear delegates, colleagues, partners and friends

I am pleased to present this report to the Congress, summarizing the key activities, achievements, and challenges faced by the ICF over the past three years. This period has been marked by significant growth, strategic restructuring, and an ongoing commitment to expanding the global reach of our sport.

Challenges Over the Last Three Years

The environment in which we have operated over the past three years has been particularly challenging. We assumed office amid the Covid-19 pandemic, which brought unprecedented disruptions to our activities. Furthermore, we had to navigate the complex aftermath of geopolitical developments, including Russia's attack on Ukraine, which required us to make balanced and strategic decisions. Despite these obstacles, we remained steadfast in our mission to develop and promote canoeing worldwide.

Organizational Restructuring and Expansion

Recognizing the need for a more effective organizational structure, we initiated significant changes within the ICF office. After nearly two decades of success, it became clear that a new approach was essential, including the introduction of new personnel in key roles at our headquarters. Our objective was to enhance our ability to address critical issues effectively and efficiently. To achieve this, we optimized wage costs in Lausanne, allowing us to hire additional staff without increasing overall expenses.

Currently, we have five employees based in Hangzhou office, with plans to increase this number to 11 by the end of the year. Additionally, subject to your approval, we intend to hire around 15 new employees in Hungary. These

additions will ensure that we have sufficient capacity to handle all tasks, and we are now focused on implementing efficient office structures to maximize the benefits of these new resources across all aspects of our sport.

Financial Management and Optimization

The increase in personnel does not imply reductions in other areas of our operations. Our budget for the next two years is designed to allocate more funds for development activities, special projects, and support for our continental federations. We have successfully diversified our revenue sources, reducing our dependency on the IOC. In 2021, 91% of our revenue came from the IOC, in the new cycle, we plan to reduce this to 60%, effectively doubling our overall budget.

Growth in Sponsorship

Our efforts to increase our financial independence have been greatly supported by growing interest from sponsors. Over the past three years, we have welcomed numerous new supporters, whose contributions have been invaluable in advancing our sport. Importantly, our new partners are not limited to within the canoeing industry, we have also attracted global brands such as BYD, Alibaba, and Deloitte. This partnership with major global players highlights the growing international popularity and commercial value of our sport.

Globalization Efforts

A core priority during our tenure has been to expand the global reach of canoeing. While our sport is strong in Europe, we recognized the need to grow in other regions. The first steps in this direction have been taken, with World Championships and World Cups being awarded to venues across America, Asia, and Oceania. We just had a successful canoe sprint World Championships in Samarkant, the first ever on the Asian soil, and the upcoming events include the canoe slalom World Championships in Australia next year and in Oklahoma in 2026. These events will help to boost the global profile of our sport.

Promoting Unity Across Disciplines

Always moving forward

A key insight during our tenure has been the need to promote unity across all canoeing disciplines. While each discipline has its dedicated fan base, we must find ways to engage audiences across the entire sport. The ICF Super Cup in Hangzhou, which combined five disciplines into a compact final program, was a successful first step. Athletes and spectators alike enjoyed seeing the diverse skills and formats on display, and we plan to build on this initiative.

Advancements in Broadcasting and Digital Strategy

We have also made significant advancements in our digital and broadcasting strategy. Our contract with CMG marked a significant milestone in expanding our presence in China and Asia. Our innovative streaming approach has allowed us to increase engagement and reach, with a record number of live and on-demand broadcasting hours in 2023 and 2024. While we faced challenges, such as the bankruptcy of our original streaming platform, we adapted by offering live streaming on YouTube, which generated around 70,000 euros this year, which was more than we have ever earned before.

Transparency and Communication

Transparency and effective communication have been priorities for the ICF. Although there were times when we could have done better, initiatives such as the President's Letter and the revamped ICF newsletter have greatly enhanced information sharing across our national federations and committees. We will continue to prioritize effective communication to ensure that all stakeholders are informed and engaged.

Development Programs

Our approach to development has also undergone significant adaptation. Initially, our strategy of placing additional employees on each continent did not yield the desired results. We shifted our focus to establishing development hubs and joint projects, which have proven to be more effective. Our hubs in Pattaya, Thailand, have facilitated international regattas and training camps, creating new opportunities without sacrificing traditional programs like TIP camps and equipment donations.

Securing the 2028 Games Host City

Always moving forward

One of the most significant achievements during our tenure was securing Oklahoma City as the host for the 2028 Olympic Games. While this may sound straightforward, the negotiations were complex, requiring Oklahoma to make significant financial commitments to secure the hosting rights from the Los Angeles Organizing Committee. This was a major victory for our sport, ensuring that canoeing will be prominently featured at the 2028 Olympics.

Organizing Competitions and Success at Paris 2024

The organization of competitions remains the core mission of the ICF. Between 34 and 39 World Cups and World Championships were held annually during our term, with the highlight being the Olympic Games in Paris. Under the leadership of Tony Estanguet, we witnessed what many consider to be the best Games in the last 20 years for our sport. Nearly all competitions were sold out, and around 200,000 fans attended our events. The introduction of kayak cross on the Olympic stage was a particular highlight, showcasing our readiness to innovate and adapt. Special thanks go to our honorary president, Patchi, whose support was instrumental in including this exciting event.

Appreciation and Future Vision

In closing, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our national federations for their unwavering commitment to the growth of our sport. I would also like to thank the Board and Exco for their collaborative spirit, as well as our dedicated staff at the ICF office, led by our Secretary General, who have consistently gone above and beyond in their efforts.

We can be proud of what we have achieved together. Our position within the Olympic movement has been further strengthened, with representatives such as Jess Fox and Tony Estanguet playing key roles. Our work has also earned the appreciation of other international federations and the leadership of the IOC.

Moving forward, I am confident that with continued collaboration, we will achieve even greater success, expanding the global reach and appeal of canoeing.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication.

Always moving forward

Best regards



Thomas Konietzko
ICF President