



**THE 17TH ORDINARY CONGRESS OF THE
EUROPEAN CANOE ASSOCIATION**

**BUDAPEST, HUNGARY
29 MARCH 2025**

MINUTES

ITEM 1

OPENING OF THE CONGRESS

The Congress was opened by ECA President Mr Jean Zoungrana, who welcomed all delegates and expressed gratitude to the Hungarian Canoe Federation and its President Mr Gabor Schmidt for hosting the Congress.

Mr Zoungrana acknowledged recent elections within national federations, congratulated newly elected Presidents, and thanked the outgoing ones for their contributions. Special recognition was given to Mr Albert Woods (Honorary Life President), Mr Matteo Secchi (Special Olympics Manager), Dr. Adam Schmidt (Hungarian Secretary of State for Sport), and Mr Thomas Konietzko (ICF President), who also addressed the Congress.

Mr Thomas Konietzko emphasized the return of ICF headquarters to Budapest and underlined the importance of strengthening governance, increasing global visibility, and improving digital engagement to grow the sport sustainably.

Dr Adam Schmidt, reflected on Hungary's strong performance in the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, particularly highlighting Hungary's success in kayaking and canoeing, the development of a new national canoe academy, and the inclusion of Stand-Up Paddling at the European level. He emphasized the importance of engaging youth, including non-elite athletes, and encouraged national federations to adapt similar inclusive strategies.

A moment of silence was held in honour of canoeing colleagues who had passed away since the previous Congress.

ITEM 2

ROLL – CALL OF DELEGATES AND ESTABLISHING OF THE QUORUM

The ECA General Secretary Branko Lovric did the roll-call of the delegates and reported the presence of

34 National Federations as follows:

AND, AUT, AZE, BEL, BIH, BUL, CRO, CYP, CZE, DEN, ESP, EST, FIN, FRA, GBR, GER, GRE, HUN, IRL, ITA, KOS, LTU, NED, NOR, POL, POR, ROU, RUS, SLO, SRB, SVK, SWE, TUR and UKR.

The quorum was reached; the count of votes showed a total of **34** valid votes. In addition, he explained that the absolute majority is **18** votes, and the 2/3 majority is **23** votes. Therefore, 23 votes would be necessary for the Statute changes. It was decided that the voting would be conducted by a show of hands.

ITEM 3

APPOINTMENT OF SCRUTINEERS FOR THE PERIOD OF THE CONGRESS

The Congress unanimously accepted the Secretary General's proposal that Mr Wolfram Goetz from Germany, Mr Jan Bohac from Czechia, and Mrs Charlotte Bakkes from Netherlands serve as scrutineers during the Congress.

ITEM 4

PRESENTATION AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA OF THE CONGRESS

With no objections or proposed changes, the agenda was unanimously approved by the Congress.

ITEM 5

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS

The minutes from the Extraordinary Congress held in Antalya (9th of November 2024), and with no comments or amendments raised, were approved unanimously.

ITEM 6

REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT AND BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL

President Jean Zoungrana presented a comprehensive report to the Congress, outlining the progress of the ECA since the last Congress. He highlighted the implementation of modern governance tools, regular and transparent Board meetings, and the approval of new statutes and strategic plans. He also reflected on the success of recent sporting events, development camps, and broader international cooperation. Looking ahead, he emphasised priorities such as organisational structure, financial stability, and inclusive growth.

Following this, Secretary General Branko Lovric delivered his report focusing on the administrative and operational work of the ECA Office. He summarised the coordination of meetings, communication with national federations, and support for statutory processes. He expressed appreciation for the collaboration of the federations and the commitment of the ECA staff.

ITEM 7

SPORT & DEVELOPEMENT REPORT TD REPORTS

Sport and Development Report for 2023–2024 was presented, outlining expanded discipline representation, enhanced participation, and successful development initiatives such as training camps and inclusive competitions. The report was received without remarks, and all discipline-specific reports are available on the ECA website for reference.

ITEM 8

VIDEO – 2023/2024

A video presentation prepared by Nina Jelenc showcased the highlights of the ECA's activities across the 2023–2024 period, summarising achievements in sport, development, and media coverage.

ITEM 9

ECA SPORT PROGRAMME

The ECA Sport Programme for period 2025–2028 was presented, highlighting development of all disciplines, improved event structure, updated rules, digital tools, and sustainability. Focus was also placed on inclusive competitions, better ITO and coach education, and support for recreational paddling.

The ECA Sport Programme 2025–2028 was unanimously approved.

ITEM 10

ECA FINANCIAL REPORT 2023-2024 AND REPORT BY THE AUDITOR

The ECA Secretary General presented the financial report for the period 2023–2024 to the Congress. The report showed that most income derived from event-related revenues, while other sources such as sponsorship, TV rights, and fees remained minimal or absent. The Auditor, Mrs. Evelina Petrova, submitted her written report with a positive opinion on the financial statements.

The financial and auditor's reports were approved by 34 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions.

ITEM 11

ECA ECONOMIC MODEL

The proposal for a revised ECA economic model was presented, including future hosting fees (from 2028), athlete registration fees, adjusted membership fees based on federation size, and sponsorship strategies. Results from a member federation survey indicated majority support for these changes.

ITEM 12

FIXING THE ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION FEE FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS (2025-2026)

Adjusting the annual subscription fee was proposed, according to the new two-year budget model, with revised rates based on ICF classification.

The proposed annual fees were divided into three categories:

- Category 1: €1000
- Category 2: €250
- Category 3: €100

The annual subscription fees for 2025–2026 were approved by 21 votes in favour, 6 against and 7 abstention.

ITEM 13

ECA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

President Jean Zoungwana presented the ECA Development Programme for 2025–2026, focusing on governance reform, financial sustainability, improved communication, and enhanced cooperation with partners such as ICF, WRF, and Special Olympics. Key actions include appointing a CEO, launching training initiatives, and supporting recreational and inclusive paddling projects.

The Development Programme 2025–2026 was approved by 34 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions.

ITEM 14

ESTABLISHING THE BUDGET FOR 2025/2026

The ECA Secretary General presented the proposed budget for 2025–2026, aligned with the objectives outlined in the strategic plan and development programme.

The budget for 2025–2026 was approved by 31 votes in favour, 0 against and 3 abstentions.

ITEM 15

ECA NAME CHANGE

President Jean Zoungwana presented the Board’s proposal for the legal and administrative transformation of the European Canoe Association (ECA) into “Paddle Europe.” He explained the rationale behind the change, including the lack of formal registration in Italy, the legal status as a foreign association in Croatia, and the need to align with the ICF’s rebranding to “World Paddling.” The proposed transformation involves a full legal and structural update, including changes to the statutes, official name, and headquarters location.

Three motions were submitted to the Congress for vote:

MOTION 1 – Name Change to Paddle Europe

The Congress was asked to approve the renaming of the “European Canoe Association (ECA)” to “Paddle Europe,” to recognize Paddle Europe as the legal successor of the ECA, and to mandate the Board to undertake all necessary legal and administrative steps to implement this during 2025.

The motion was approved by 31 votes in favour, 0 against and 3 abstentions.

MOTION 2 – Adoption of the New Statutes

The Congress was asked to approve the updated statutes of Paddle Europe, reflecting the new name, legal structure, and governance adjustments, including provisions on dissolution and asset transfer.

The motion was approved by 34 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions.

MOTION 3 – Removal from Croatian Register

The Congress was asked to approve the removal of the ECA from the Register of Foreign Associations in Croatia, and to authorize the Board to implement this decision. The Congress agreed that the Board may determine the date of closure once all legal and administrative steps have been completed.

The motion was approved by 34 votes in favour, 0 against and 0 abstention.

ITEM 16

PROPOSALS FOR THE ECA STATUTES CHANGES - RECEIVED FROM NF

The Congress considered a proposal submitted by the Belgian Canoe Federation to amend Article 15.3 of the ECA Statutes. The proposal aimed to change the procedure for appointing the Chairs of Technical Committees. Under the current statute, Chairs are nominated by their National Federation and appointed by the ECA Board. The proposed change would require that Chairs be elected by member federations during the Congress and then confirmed by the newly elected Board.

The ECA Board presented its opinion, highlighting several operational and legal concerns. The Congress discussed the implications of the change, and the matter was put to a vote.

The proposal was rejected by 6 votes in favour, 14 against and 14 abstentions.

ITEM 17

ECA ATHLETES COMMITTEE

The Congress was informed about the structure and formation of the ECA Athletes Committee.

The committee will be composed of eight members: six representatives from Olympic and Paralympic disciplines elected by athletes during the 2025 European Championships, and two from non-Olympic disciplines appointed by the committee and confirmed by the Board. The Chair will be elected internally and will attend ECA Board meetings in an advisory, non-voting capacity.

During the discussion, delegates raised questions regarding the balance between disciplines, the role of the committee in technical matters, and means of communication with athletes. The Board confirmed the inclusive structure, clarified the Chair's role, and expressed openness to further strengthening the committee's involvement and visibility.

ITEM 18

RECREATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

Dr. Gabriele Koch presented the new Recreational and Educational Programme, developed as part of the broader ECA Development Strategy. The programme aims to promote paddling as a lifelong, accessible, and inclusive activity, supporting both personal development and environmental awareness.

The Congress was informed about the efforts to integrate recreational paddling into ECA's structure, through event recognition, the development of a European calendar, and cooperation with local organisers. Special attention is given to safety standards, educational tools, and the Euro Paddle Pass to standardise paddling competencies across Europe.

The initiative was positively received and presented as a key step in strengthening the social and educational role of the ECA.

ITEM 19

SPECIAL OLYMPIC PRESENTATION

Mr. Matteo Secchi, Special Olympics Manager, delivered a presentation on behalf of Special Olympics Europe, focusing on the inclusion of athletes with intellectual disabilities in canoeing. He emphasised the shared values of accessibility, participation, and dignity, and highlighted existing examples of cooperation with national federations and local organisers across Europe.

The Congress was informed of ongoing pilot projects and the intention to build a long-term partnership between the ECA and Special Olympics, with the goal of embedding inclusive paddling opportunities within ECA's broader development strategy.

The presentation was warmly received and recognised as a significant step toward promoting equity and inclusion in European paddling.

ITEM 20

ECA BOARD ELECTIONS

The Secretary General explained in detail the voting procedure. Candidates were invited to introduce themselves to the Congress, which they did in a short speech. The Secretary General then did the roll-call of the voting delegates in alphabetical order for a secret ballot.

List 1:

- Elections for the members of the Board

Six nominations were received (listed alphabetically):

1. Vitor Felix (POR),
2. Christian Jacobsen (DEN),
3. Peter Karai (HUN),
4. Eva Lindmark (SWE),
5. Greg Smale (GBR),
6. Stien Verlinden (BEL)

With 5 places available. The four candidates with the most votes would serve a four-year term (until 2029), and the fifth would serve a two-year term (until 2027), completing the mandate of a resigning Board member.

The President, Jean Zoungrana, announced the results of the elections.

The election went as follows:

1. Vitor Felix (POR) received 31 votes and therefore was elected for a 4-year term
2. Christian Jacobsen (DEN) received 24 votes and therefore was elected for a 2-year term
3. Peter Karai (HUN) received 30 votes and therefore was elected for a 4-year term
4. Eva Lindmark (SWE) received 21 votes
5. Greg Smale (GBR) received 33 votes and therefore was elected for a 4-year term
6. Stien Verlinden (BEL) received 31 votes and therefore was elected for a 4-year term

List 2:

– Election of the ECA Vice President

The only candidate for the position of the ECA Vice President was Mrs Moira Aston from Ireland who had been elected for 4-year term, with 34 votes in favour.

The new structure of the ECA Board of Directors:

President Mr Jean Zoungrana (FRA) Mandate valid 2027

Vice President Mrs Moira Aston (IRL) Mandate valid 2029

Vice President Mr Andrej Jelenc (SLO) Mandate valid 2027

Member Mr Vitor Felix (POR) Mandate valid 2029
Member Mrs Manuela Gawehn (GER) Mandate valid 2027
Member Christian Jacobsen (DEN) Mandate valid 2027
Member Mr Peter Karai (HUN) Mandate valid 2029
Member Mr Geir Kvillum (NOR) Mandate valid 2027
Member Mr Greg Smale (GBR) Mandate valid 2029
Member Mrs Stien Verlinden (BEL) Mandate valid 2029

ITEM 21

ELECTIONS OF THE CONTINENTAL REPRESENTATIVES TO THE ICF BOARD

Four nominations were received (listed alphabetically):

1. Moira Aston (IRL)
2. Christian Jacobsen (DEN)
3. Peter Karai (HUN)
4. Stien Verlinden (BEL)

with 2 places available, with the requirement that at least one must be female.

The President Mr Jean Zoungwana announced the results of the elections.

The election went as follows:

1. Moira Aston (IRL) received 24 votes and therefore was elected
2. Christian Jacobsen (DEN) received 7 votes
3. Peter Karai (HUN) received 21 votes and therefore was elected
4. Stien Verlinden (BEL) received 16 votes

The new structure of the ECA Representatives to the ICF Board of Directors:

President Mr Jean Zoungwana (FRA) Mandate valid 2027
Vice President Mrs Moira Aston (IRL) Mandate valid 2029
Vice President Mr Andrej Jelenc (SLO) Mandate valid 2027
Member Mr Peter Karai (HUN) Mandate valid 2029

ITEM 22

CLOSING THE CONGRESS

President Jean Zoungwana officially closed the 17th Ordinary Congress of the European Canoe Association by expressing his sincere thanks to the Hungarian Canoe Federation for their hospitality and organisation, as well as to all delegates for their active participation throughout the sessions.

Special recognition was given to several outgoing Board members who had completed their mandates. The President and the Congress expressed their appreciation for their long-standing service, dedication, and contributions to the growth and evolution of the ECA.

With warm regards and renewed energy for the future of European paddling, the Congress was officially concluded.

The Congress closed at 5 p.m.

Branko Lovrić	Jean Zoungrana
ECA Secretary General	ECA President