

IOF ETHICS PANEL REPORT TO THE IOF GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2026

This report summarises the activities of the Panel in the period since the 2024 General Assembly. In this time, it has dealt with four formal referrals and has again reviewed and revised the Rules of Procedure that it follows when considering these. It has also made recommendations to the IOF on some matters that have arisen during the course of Investigations (detailed further below) and introduced a standardised format for the reporting of Investigations to the IOF and for publication on the website of the IOF. It has also made recommendations for amendments to the Code of Ethics itself.

REFERRALS

There were two referrals concerning the status of Russian nationals and their exclusion from IOF events. One was especially detailed and time consuming. It made multiple related allegations. These referred to the implementation of the Independent Athlete status and issues of the status of formal Refugees, the absence of reprimand to member Federations who had permitted Russian athletes to compete in domestic events, and in the treatment of the complainant by the IOF.

The Panel considered in detail the position of the IOF and the manner of the decision-making process concerning the exclusion of Russian (and Belarusian) athletes from IOF events in previous cases. It concluded that the IOF had acted fully in accordance and in compliance with the power and processes determined by its Statutes. On the further detailed points, the Panel concluded that the IOF had not been in breach of any of the principles of the Code of Ethics. The Panel also determined that there had been no discriminatory action against the individual in his dealings with the IOF.

Whilst the findings of this Investigation did not support any of the claims made, it did bring to light some important matters that the Panel drew to the attention of the IOF. These first concerned the administrative arrangements for the process of seeking Independent Athlete status. The second was the need for the process of nominations to IOF Commissions to be made clearer.

There were two further recommendations which the Panel felt were especially important. The first was a request that further consideration be given to the status of formal Refugees, the second that the IOF review how it complied with data protection laws and regulations when publishing Panel Investigation reports on the public website.

All of these recommendations have been acted upon by the IOF. Having taken advice on the data protection point, the Panel has redrafted all of the previous Investigation

Reports and redacted names of any individuals cited in the reports. These redacted reports are on the public website and full copies held by the IOF.

Following the determination of the Panel, the complainant persisted in submitting further referrals that were deemed to be minor variants on the issues already considered and the Panel declined to investigate the complaints. Shortly after this, a new referral was received from the complainant's wife outlining very similar complaints. She was offered an investigation but then subsequently withdrew her referral.

There was a referral concerning an alleged physical assault at a Trail Orienteering event in Poland. Upon investigation it was established that the Polish Federation had already instigated an independent investigation into the matter. The Investigating Officer reviewed the documents made available to him and received further details from the relevant parties. His conclusion was that the matter had been appropriately dealt with and he was content with the actions taken. In the light of this the Panel agreed not to instigate a further Inquiry.

At the time of writing this report a further Investigation concerning actions at a WRE event in Italy is about to commence. The Assembly will be updated on the state of this as and when a conclusion is reached.

GOVERNANCE

The 2024 Assembly was made aware of the continuing commitment by the Panel to actively review its governance arrangements. This it has again done and has implemented changes to its Rules of Procedure. The principal ones cover the need for the Chair to consult members if a hearing is justified and the process by which an Investigating Officer presents reports to a formal Hearing. It has also removed the sanction covering "any other sanctions" it deems appropriate so that only the explicit sanctions detailed in the Code are now possible.

The Panel has again requested that the IOF-through this General Assembly-make improvements to the Code of Ethics itself. These have been accepted and the General Assembly will be asked to agree to these changes. They cover the need for the Code to be more explicit on the nature of offences, rather than rely upon broad principles, a redraft of Para 9.2 of the Code to exclude the "any other sanctions" criteria noted above, a new reference to clarify any further actions that may be taken against parties who do not engage or co-operate with the Panel. Lastly, an explicit paragraph that indemnifies members of the Panel against third party claims.

In the light of experience and workload since the last GA, the Panel has again requested the IOF to consider increasing the number of Panel members from the current 5 to 7. This has been accepted, subject to finding suitable candidates.

The Panel is an independent body and as such guards this position diligently. However, it does rely upon the cooperation and, at times, support of the IOF and its secretariat. It is appropriate that this report to the GA confirms that this relationship remains constructive and that there have been no attempts by the IOF or its officers to challenge or compromise the work of the Panel. Council has accepted and acted upon all of our recommendations. This again shows its commitment to the Panel and the strong governance culture of the IOF.

MEMBERSHIP

Members of the Panel are appointed for terms of 2 years and are limited to 4 such periods of office. Two Panel members have now served these 4 terms and are therefore not eligible for reappointment. These are Michel Ediar and the Chair, Bob Dredge. Ari-Pekka Koivisto has indicated that his significant professional commitments will mean he is not able to commit further time to the Panel and is not seeking reappointment. As Chair, I would like to record my thanks for the help and support these two gentlemen have given me whilst they have served on the Panel. I must also record my thanks to the diligent and thorough work and support that our other members, and, in particular, our Investigating Officer has given in what has been at times, a challenging set of Investigations.

Bob Dredge
For the IOF Ethics Panel
18 April 2026