

Position Statement

Integrity in Athletics

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Like everyone in athletics, I am deeply saddened by the recent WADA report on systemic doping in Russia, the serious corruption allegations against some former IAAF officials and the other scandals that seem to surface on a daily basis. Although European Athletics has not been implicated in any way and these issues are not unique to athletics, the public image and reputation of our sport have been tarnished and this, of course, touches all of us.

Any of these that prove to be true represent betrayals of athletics and its values, not to mention a threat to the commercial operations of European Athletics, which are based on the credibility of elite competition and ethically-organised events. There may be even worse to come as the second WADA report, which will be published later this week, promises to contain more troubling news.

Make no mistake, we are experiencing events of a seismic nature and they are rocking the very foundations of how our sport is organised and governed.

First Response

European Athletics' first actions have included our Council's decision to provisionally suspend the Honorary Membership of the Council of Valentin Balakhnichev, who was found by the IAAF Ethics Board to be in breach of the IAAF Code of Ethics.

Although this move is mainly symbolic and cannot be made permanent until the appeals possibilities have been exhausted and our Congress makes the final decision, it sends a clear signal that we as an organisation are in this fight, that we do not tolerate wrongdoing and that we will do what we can for the good of our sport.

Looking Forward

Rebuilding the reputation of athletics is likely to be the biggest job we have ever undertaken. Symbolic gestures and cosmetic measures will not be sufficient, this grave and unprecedented situation calls for fundamental reform.

But even in these dark times I am optimistic and I believe that European Athletics' position holds positive possibilities. We will learn and, in the end, we will profit from what is a unique opportunity to renew our sport.

To start with, my optimism is based on the fact that we are still blessed to be the custodians of the great sport of athletics and of its core values. Insiders to the sport do not need to be reminded of all the truly good things that draw us, the millions of participants and the public, to it. European Athletics' 'Your Sport for Life' slogan has never been more important as a summary of what we believe and what we must fight for.

Next, we have good leadership in the recently elected IAAF President, Sebastian Coe. European Athletics has full confidence that he is the right man for the current challenges. We will give him the support he needs for the extremely tough work he must now do. This includes our endorsement of the measures in the IAAF "Rebuilding Trust" roadmap and timelines announced on 4 January.

But we will also push him, both with our commitment and with our ideas.

The European contingent on the IAAF Council is strong, intelligent and united. We have already started discussions on the fightback required to restore the credibility of athletics. In what will be a valuable collaboration with President Coe, we will make significant contributions to the direction the world governing body takes in the coming months and years.

One member of this group, Anna Riccardi (ITA), is serving on the IAAF/WADA Task Force working with the Russian federation on reform of the doping control system in that country so that it becomes compliant with the World Anti-Doping Code. With her Task Force colleagues, she will be representing the interests and values of athletics as a whole. She will also be keeping us informed on developments as they happen.

Consistent with European Athletics' constitutional Objects, we will cooperate with the IAAF and do whatever we can to help Russia come back into the sport on the right terms. We will also extend our hand to any other federation that WADA may identify as problematic or that may need assistance to govern the sport in a correct and ethical way.

Our philosophy will be one of "tough love" – firm, fair and respectful – but our tolerance for doping and any form of corruption must remain at zero.

We will also support our Member Federations that have ideas to contribute to the discussion about our sport's future now taking place, for example the 'Manifesto for Clean Athletics' published by UK Athletics.

Our Programme

We believe a cultural revolution will be required for athletics to rebuild its reputation and bring the sport's governance to where it needs to be.

For our part, European Athletics will be committing time and resources to the initiatives outlined below, some of which were already on our Leading Change agenda. Intended to complement ideas put forward by the IAAF and Member Federations, they are the contribution of one Area association to what must be an effort by the whole of our sport.

- **I Run Clean:** This simple statement was showcased on the number bibs at last month's SPAR European Cross Country Championships and attracted positive attention on social media. It is a way for the athletes themselves to make a statement about how they want their sport to be. We hope that in the future it will develop as a platform for other, more substantial ways for them to engage in the fight against doping.

- **Good Governance:** European Athletics has discussed this topic for some time, driven partly by interest at the European Union level, and we have made a number of changes to, for example, increase transparency and limit presidential terms. This year we will commission a governance compliance audit for European Athletics and we will study recent EU funded projects to see if they could, with our support, help our Member Federations improve their arrangements. We will also be a strong voice within the IAAF to make sure it stays on the course set by President Coe. Finally, we will be looking at ways to better hear, evaluate and react to ethical issues raised by so called whistle-blowers, the media and others. Our aim is to make athletics in Europe a shining example of good governance for other sports around the world.
- **Tougher Penalties:** Many in Europe have welcomed the World Anti-Doping Code's increase in the length of suspension for serious doping offences to four years but feel it is still not enough. Some scientific work suggests that the effects of some forms of doping might have a longer effect on performance than previously thought. Although yet to be proven in humans, some believe that doped athletes could benefit even after a four year ban. Therefore, the penalty for a serious doping offence should make it highly unlikely a guilty athlete can return to an elite career, even if lifetime bans are not legally sustainable. European Athletics will work with interested Member Federations to explore the possibility of longer bans and then push for the necessary rule changes. In any case, we will propose an increase in the number of tests required of banned athletes during their suspension periods.
- **European Records Review:** The recent scandals have reopened the discussion about the legitimacy of certain records in our sport. These link us to a past in which neither we nor the public can have full confidence. Over the years different approaches for addressing this question have been proposed but the issue is very complex and so far nothing has happened. It is clear that now the situation is different. We will set up a special project team in the coming months to look again at what is best for the sport and possibly a new approach to records in Europe that could be an example for the IAAF and our Member Federations. We will also review the lists of all past award winners, like our European Athlete of the Year or our Coaching Awards, to see if action needs to be taken. Whatever changes we make will be clearly explained so that the public can see how European Athletics is coming to terms with the realities of our sport's past.
- **Anti-Doping Education:** Work has already started on a major project in which European Athletics will invest in a new, values-based education programme for elite athletes, starting with the U18 category, to supplement national programmes where they exist and become a mandatory condition for participation in any European Athletics event. Eventually, we want to work with our Member Federations to take a modified version of the programme to the grassroots of our sport – clubs, schools, mass participation events – to ensure that every athlete is properly exposed to the values of our sport. The ultimate aim is to create, from the bottom up, an ethical consensus within the sport that crosses borders and cultures.

- **Assessment and Monitoring of National Anti-Doping Systems:** It is clear from the recent case of Russia, the Lance Armstrong case in cycling and cases in many other sports that individual athletes are small fish in the world of doping. This fight is often against systems that are bigger and far better resourced than even the federations. Our current doping control work is essential and we welcome new initiatives from WADA and the increased resources promised by President Coe, but until we know more about the intent and commitment of all the actors involved – coaches, doctors, agents, sponsors, sport authorities, national doping agencies, the media, governments, etc – our focus on the athletes will not fundamentally alter the situation. Sport as a whole needs to get a step ahead and quantify how serious the fight against doping is taken at all levels in each country. Our understanding must go beyond compliance with the World Anti-Doping Code to include a wider range of factors that affect the prevalence of doping so that we can identify the specific areas where further work is required and eventually build credibility. Of course, such a system would be much bigger than anything European Athletics could manage on its own so we envisage pushing the appropriate agencies with ideas and becoming a test case for the system as it develops.

The Coming Days

When the second WADA report is released later this week we in European Athletics will carefully study it and any recommendations it contains. If immediate comments are called for, we will make them. Then we will take our time to review the projects and proposals listed above and make any adjustments or additions required.

Our policy will not be one of quick fixes but, rather, we will take a deliberate and systematic approach. The credibility, trust and respect our sport requires will take time and great effort to rebuild.

We will take this time and we are confident it can be done.

Personally, I will put my energy to realising this task. I thank all my colleagues in athletics for their support.

Svein Arne Hansen
President
13 January 2016