

**FISA Council Recommendations on Rule 36**  
**World Championship Programmes**  
*At 02.09.2017*

## **1. Introduction and Background**

At the 2017 Extraordinary Congress in Tokyo, the delegates voted to delegate the authority to change Rule 36 (the World Championships boat classes (Senior, Under 23 and Junior)) to the 2017 Ordinary Congress in Sarasota-Bradenton on 2 October 2017. This decision was taken due to the timing of the IOC Executive Board's decision on the Olympic Programme set for July 2017. It was expected that the IOC decision would likely influence the composition of the World Championship boat classes. The IOC Executive Board ultimately decided on the following events in the Olympic Programme for 2020: W1x, W2x, W2-, W4x, W4-, W8+, LW2x, M1x, M2x, M2-, M4x, M4-, M8+, LM2x.

FISA then initiated a review project to consider what key principles should guide decisions relating to the World Championship programmes and to identify the various options. The FISA Executive Committee established a working group to oversee the review project. A series of meetings were held with member federations at the three World Rowing Cup regattas, the European Championships, the World Rowing Under 23 Championships and finally at the World Rowing Junior Championships in Trakai, LTU on 5 August 2017.

The outcome of this review project is the identification of a number of options for the World Championship programmes. Those options are presented in the Agenda Papers of the 2017 Ordinary Congress and will be for vote by the Congress. The composition of a World Championship programme remains a matter for Congress under Rule 36. The FISA Council now presents for consideration by the delegates its position on the key principles of the World Championship programmes and its recommendations.

## **2. Key Concepts and Principles**

### **2.1. Purpose and Goal of World Rowing Championships**

#### **World Rowing Championships**

The World Rowing Championships is the annual pinnacle competitive rowing event for rowers worldwide which showcases the very best of the sport and those who partake in it.

**Vision:** The World Rowing Championships is the most important international rowing competition, other than the Olympic Games. It is a globally respected, prime sporting event which allows the world's very best rowers to present their talent and skills in regatta venues that showcase the value and attractiveness of the environment in our sport.

#### **Purpose and goals of the World Rowing Championships**

1. To provide a platform and the conditions that allow the best rowers of the world to perform to the best of their abilities
2. To determine the world champions, medalists and a final world ranking for a given year in each event

3. To promote and facilitate a broad participation of rowers representing national rowing federations from all around the world
4. To provide an entertaining and informative experience for participants, spectators and television viewers of all nationalities, languages and ages.
5. To stage the event in a way that supports FISA's strategic plan for the sport of rowing and which upholds FISA's principles: the development of the individual; the promotion of international understanding; the promotion of rowing as a lifetime sport; and the affirmation of collective environmental responsibility.

## **2.2. The criteria for including a boat class in the World Rowing Championship programmes**

There are currently no specific criteria in our Rules for including a boat class in the World Championship programmes. The Council recognises that such criteria should be developed. Member federations identified and endorsed seven guiding principles for programme composition as part of the Olympic programme review and this World Championship programme review. These principles could in the future be considered as a basis for developing rules for including a boat class in the World Championship programmes.

The seven principles are, in summary:

1. Excellence: The World Championships should provide a platform for the world's best athletes to compete.
2. Participation: The World Championship programme should allow sufficient opportunities in a range of boat classes to enable participation by a broad range of NFs.
3. Gender equality: Sport is a key means for society to break down barriers and reduce gender discrimination and FISA supports the goal of gender equality in all FISA events
4. Attractive programme/spectator experience: The World Championships should offer an attractive racing programme to enhance the experience for both live spectators and TV viewers.
5. Balance: Between different boat classes and between sweep and sculling events.
6. Inclusive: The programme should offer opportunities for rowers of different body types and abilities to participate.
7. Pathways: The events offered should have a clear relationship to each other to allow logical pathways for athlete development and competition structures and should also assist the development of rowers to progress along the pathway towards the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

## **2.3. Gender Equality**

The Council believes that gender equality is essential for the credibility of our sport and strongly favours that all World Championship programmes become gender equal immediately.

## **2.4. Excellence, minimum entry threshold and Natural Death Rule**

The Council supports the principle that is the basis of the *Natural Death Rule*. The *Natural Death Rule* provides that, to be on the World Championship programme, the competition in any event must be of a certain standard of excellence. That standard of excellence for a World Championship requires at least three rounds of racing with the winner having competed against at least six other crews. One way to achieve this is the *Natural Death Rule* that automatically eliminates events that do not reach this threshold for three consecutive years. Congress can then review the future of such events at each Extraordinary Congress.

The Council accepts that the *Natural Death Rule* may result in periods of gender inequality in the event programme, should an event in one gender be eliminated through the application of the rule. In such cases, the events in question would be re-evaluated and changes proposed at the next Extraordinary Congress in order to return to a gender equal World Championship event programme. The Council notes that the *Natural Death Rule* serves to reveal weaknesses in the event programme, thereby allowing us to look for solutions to address the weaknesses. Here is the current wording of the Natural Death Rule (found on page 58 of the FISA Rule Book):

*If, in any of the above events, excluding the events designated for the Olympic and Paralympic Games and all events for Olympic boat classes in Senior, Under 23 and Junior categories, there are less than seven starters in three consecutive World Rowing Championship regattas, then that event shall be automatically removed from the programme of subsequent World Rowing Championship regattas.*

## **2.5. Pathways**

The events offered at the World Championships should have a clear relationship to each other and to the Olympic and Paralympic Games to allow logical pathways for athlete development and competition structures from the age group World Championships (Junior and Under 23) to the Senior World Championships. The event composition should also assist the development of rowers to progress along the pathway towards the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Council noted that national, regional and continental events can also be an integral part of the pathway to the Olympic and Paralympic Games and recognised that those are important opportunities for rowers to reach their full potential. While encouraging the application of the guiding principles discussed above, the Council respects the autonomy of each continental association to develop its event programmes with reference to the local context as well as Olympic and World Championship programmes.

### 3. Council recommendations for the open, lightweight and para-rowing event programmes for the World Championships

The Rule 36 Review Project led to the creation of a number of options for the different categories within the World Championship programmes; specifically: open, lightweight and para rowing. While all options will be presented to the 2017 Congress for vote, the Council considers that it is within its sphere of responsibility to indicate its recommended choices for the World Championship programmes and the reasoning behind these choices. With one exception relating to gender equality, these choices are simplified by considering them in the three separate categories; namely, open, lightweight and para-rowing.

#### 3.1. Gender Equality

Because the Council recommends the immediate adoption of a gender equal programme, several other aspects need to be addressed. Gender equality can be reached either by eliminating men's events where there are no matching women's events, adding women's events to match the men's events, or a combination of both. When adding events, the Council notes the need to consider a number of factors including the total number of events on offer at a World Championships, the impact that this has on the size of the Championships and the resulting implications for the organising committee and the venue. At the same time, the Council's view is that removing 'healthy' events, or those that contribute significantly as pathways to senior and Olympic events, just for the sake of gender equality would be counterproductive.

#### 3.2. Recommendation for the Open category

In the open category, the Council recommends option b. In this option, the coxed four for women is added at the Junior and Under 23 level and the men's coxed pair is removed at the Senior level in order to create a gender equal programme. The coxed fours are seen as pathway events that help to develop sweep rowers for the senior level.

The Council believes that the strong entries this year in the BW4- and the JW4- at the Under 23 (19 entries) and Junior (17 entries) World Championships indicate that women's sweep rowing has already felt the impact of the W4- becoming part of the Olympic programme. Furthermore, the risk of a small number of entries in this event is neither likely nor significant. The Council considers it more important to implement a gender-equal programme immediately, and thus does not favour the phasing-in of the BW4+ and/or JW4+.

In recent years, the coxed pair has mainly been used by larger national federations to give their spares an opportunity to race. The Council does not believe that this event should continue in this form.

#### Recommended Open Category Option is "b":

Men							
<b>World Champs</b>	M1x	M2x	M4x	M2-	M4-	M2+	M8+
<b>Under 23 Champs</b>	BM1x	BM2x	BM4x	BM2-	BM4-	BM4+	BM8+
<b>Junior Champs</b>	JM1x	JM2x	JM4x	JM2-	JM4-	JM4+	JM8+
Women							
<b>World Champs</b>	W1x	W2x	W4x	W2-	W4-		W8+
<b>Under 23 Champs</b>	BW1x	BW2x	BW4x	BW2-	BW4-	BW4+	BW8+
<b>Junior Champs</b>	JW1x	JW2x	JW4x	JW2-	JW4-	JW4+	JW8+

### 3.3. Recommendation for the Lightweight category

Six options, in addition to the current programme, will be presented for consideration for the lightweight event programme at the 2017 Congress.

As the Council recommends the immediate implementation of a gender-equal programme, two of the options (4 and 6) as well as the current programme are consequently not recommended.

The Council considers that lightweight sweep rowing should be retained at both the senior and under 23 level. That excludes options 3 and 5.

This leaves two options. Option 1 would make the programme gender equal by adding lightweight women's events to match the existing lightweight men's events (LW2-, LW4-, BLW2-, BLW4-). Option 2 removes the lightweight men's four from the senior and under 23 level adding the lightweight women's pair at both levels.

The Council recommends option 2. It has heard from many member federations that the lightweight fours are not receiving support in either the men's or the women's events and that the lightweight pair remains a potential development boat for either the lightweight doubles or the open pairs at senior level.

As an additional note, the Council reconfirms the opinion that lightweight rowing is not appropriate at the junior level.

#### Recommended Lightweight Category Option is "2":

Men					
<b>World Champs</b>	LM1x	LM2x	LM4x	LM2-	LM4-
<b>Under 23 Champs</b>	BLM1x	BLM2x	BLM4x	BLM2-	BLM4-
Women					
<b>World Champs</b>	LW1x	LW2x	LW4x	LW2-	
<b>Under 23 Champs</b>	BLW1x	BLW2x	BLW4x	BLW2-	

### 3.4. Recommendation for the Para-Rowing category

The Council has received feedback and suggestions on the Para Rowing World Championship event programme from the Para Rowing Working Group, the Para Rowing Commission and the National Federations through the NF meetings. This feedback has convinced the Council of the need and the value of introducing pathway events to the World Championships. This would enable National Federations to build their PR2 doubles and PR3 fours using singles and pairs respectively.

Para rowing is still considered to be a developing category. Due to classification requirements and competition from other para sports, National Federations do not always find the appropriate athletes at the same time to form elite crews. Having the PR2 singles and PR3 pairs would help the National Federations keep athletes engaged in international competition while they recruit and develop other athletes to compete in the Paralympic boat class events.

The Council must be sensitive to the increasing size of the World Championships and also the ratio between the para and non-para events. Accordingly, it is not in favour of adding six new events. However, it recognises the value of having the PR2 singles to support the PR2 double and also the PR3 pairs to support the PR3 four. Therefore, the Council recommends Option iii.

Alternatively, and as an interim step, the Council would also support the immediate introduction of the PR2 singles (option 1), with the PR3 pairs to be introduced at a later date.

#### Recommended Para Rowing Option is “iii”:

Men					
World Champs	PR1 1x	PR2 1x	PR3 2-		
Women					
World Champs	PR1 1x	PR2 1x	PR3 2-		
Mixed					
World Champs		PR2 2x	PR3 2x	PR3 4+	

### 3.5. The Recommended World Rowing Championships programme

Based on the preferred options in the open, lightweight and para-rowing categories described above, the Council recommends that the following block of events for inclusion in the World Championships programmes:

<b>Men</b>											
<b>World Champs</b>	M1x	M2x	M4x	M2-	M4-		M8+	LM1x	LM2x	LM4x	LM2-
<b>Under 23 Champs</b>	BM1x	BM2x	BM4x	BM2-	BM4-	BM4+	BM8+	BLM1x	BLM2x	BLM4x	BLM2-
<b>Junior Champs</b>	JM1x	JM2x	JM4x	JM2-	JM4-	JM4+	JM8+				

<b>Women</b>											
<b>World Champs</b>	W1x	W2x	W4x	W2-	W4-		W8+	LW1x	LW2x	LW4x	LW2-
<b>Under 23 Champs</b>	BW1x	BW2x	BW4x	BW2-	BW4-	BW4+	BW8+	BLW1x	BLW2x	BLW4x	BLW2-
<b>Junior Champs</b>	JW1x	JW2x	JW4x	JW2-	JW4-	JW4+	JW8+				

<b>Para-Rowing</b>											
<b>World Champs</b>	PR1M1x	PR1W1x	PR2Mix2x	PR2M1X	PR2W1X	PR3Mix2x	PR3Mix4+	PR3M2-	PR3W2-		