

Date of the report: 15.02.2025

➤ **ECA TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

Medical and Anti-Doping Advisory Committee

Chair: Jane Gibson

Current Members 2024-2025: Michael Cassan, Phillipe Grippon, Jaime Milheiro, Visar Emeni,

➤ **ACTIVITIES 2023-2024**

Most of the current Committee were not members in 2023-2024. The main activity in 2023-2024 was producing recommendations for running events in hot weather. The 'Extreme Heat Policy' arose out of a query from the marathon committee who had noted a couple of episodes of possible heat-related illness (HRI) during competitions during 2023. No policies existed in ECA (or the ICF) regarding mitigation of possible HRI so, with the increase in extreme weather events, particularly heatwaves, occurring in Europe, it was felt to be appropriate to produce guidelines for organisers and some advice for athletes. This was subsequently published on the ECA website.

Another change has been to 're-badge' the medical section of the website to 'Health and Wellbeing' to make it easier for people to find information.

Jane Gibson has been closely involved with producing recommendations to the ICF on the Transgender policy which have been submitted to the ICF ExCo for consideration. It was agreed by the ECA Medical Committee that we would not separately research this but would review the ICF decision and, most likely, adopt the same.

Jane Gibson has also been instrumental in writing recommendations for a Head Injury protocol for use across all disciplines in Paddlesport. These recommendations are currently under review with Peter Karai for a legal opinion.

➤ **DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

The new Committee is enthusiastic about developing resources for the wellbeing for athletes and others involved in Paddlesport. We hope to be able to develop the 'Health and Wellbeing' section of the website so that we can have advice for athletes, coaches and host organising committees in easy-to-use formats. Particular topics that have already been advanced are: Athlete recovery and prevention of overtraining; prevention of shoulder and back injury; water safety standards; a commitment to having health and safety information as part of the competition bidding process eg water quality and climate data; review of the Head Injury Protocol and adoption across all disciplines.

We also need to update our information on anti-Doping and part of this process needs to be a clarification of the role of the ITA and the ICF in ECA's anti-doping processes.

We have also discussed the possibility of having a Medical Congress every 4 years at a major European Championships to which all interested parties would be invited. We would hope that this would attract not only European NF Medical Officers but also world-wide doctors involved in the sport as well as physiotherapists, coaches and the wider athlete health community. This will be a big event and will need careful planning but will advance the role of health and wellbeing as central to the wellbeing of the sport.

It is recognised that this agenda will take some time as all information needs to be thoroughly researched prior to simplification and rationalisation into a guideline or advice.

➤ **MEETINGS**

The previous Committee was hard to galvanise into action so much of the work was done solely by JG but it is clear that the new committee will enthusiastically embrace the challenges ahead. Regular meetings have already started.

➤ **EDUCATION**

It is important that we educate all those involved in paddlesports about how to stay healthy. For example, the purpose of the Extreme Heat Policy was to educate Host Organisers about the risks of high temperatures and humidity as well as to provide information on how to mitigate against it. We also provided an 'info sheet' for athletes that can be downloaded off the website for use at grassroots level as well as elite venues.

This is the kind of format that we plan to use for other guidance that we produce. In particular, we want to educate athletes about how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

➤ **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Jane Gibson attended the European Games on behalf of ECA as the medical representative.

➤ **ECA KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

Production of the Extreme Heat Policy.

➤ STRATEGIC PLANS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

It will be important to understand whether policies and guidance that we produce on behalf of ECA are actually followed by Host Organisers and whether athletes and others find our information useful. We should audit this in some way in the future.

It is also unlikely that athletes will search the ECA website looking for information on health topics and are much more likely to seek advice from TikTok or other social media. We need to think about how we get our messages across to athletes. We need to research this and involve the athletes in these discussions.