

## **Principles for the Governance of Dragon Boating in Europe**

Dear EDBF Members, dear Colleagues,

We have just held the EDBF and IDBF Congresses. I have been elected President of the European Dragon Boat Federation and I will be fully in charge as from 1st January 2018. Maura Dezi has been elected EDBF Treasurer, the EDBF Secretary General Julie Doyle and the EDBF Vice President Peter Jarosi have been elected IDBF Vice Presidents. Our past President Mike Haslam received the honorary title of IDBF Founder, Honorary President.

On behalf of the EDBF Executive Committee I wish to express our sincere thanks to all the EDBF Members for their trust in us and to all of you to be in Belgrade for the EDBF Convention 2017.

I ask you a special vote of thanks for Alan Van Caubergh for his commitment and service to EDBF in his 3 terms of office as EDBF President. Thank you, Alan.

The last 3 years have been truly remarkable 3 years in the course of development of the Dragon Boat Sport, with very successful Continental and World Championships.

For the future we will do our utmost to fulfil our mission.

There are great expectations from Paddlers, from the Dragon Boat Community of Europe and from our EDBF Members. In 2018 Europe will host the 3 main events of the year, the EDBF ENC in Brandenburg, the IDBF CCWC in Szeged and the IBCPC Participatory Festival in Florence.

Our Federation's Members are the bedrock of our sport.

The EDBF faces new challenges and we need to have real vision and fresh leadership in tackling those challenges.

Our objectives for the future are that we need to offer better competitions, improve the EDBF presentation of our sport, reform our calendar, develop new media, and shape our own future within the IDBF and the European paddle-sport community.

We are taking this important responsibility for the Paddlers and for the Dragon Boat Community of Europe.

The Dragon Boat Community of Europe includes not just paddlers but all stakeholders: the Race Officials, the EDBF Members and the Clubs, the Coaches, supporters and families, the Event Organizers, the boat builders, the sponsors and maybe others to be identified.

We have many pressing issues within EDBF, first of all the GOVERNANCE of our sport.

We need to work together, to involve the Executive Committee and the Council in the day by day life of our organization.

We need to maintain close ties with our Dragon Boat Community of Europe, especially with the Paddlers. We must organize our Paddlers, communicate with them, serve them, learn from them, and subject ourselves to their oversight. We should always be part of the Paddlers Community of Europe, work for their interests and share good and bad times with them.

The EDBF will need to be committed to the long-term future of dragon boat sport, developing strategies in areas such as youth development, sustainable development, education, prevention, safety and antidoping. We should never be inactive.

My main goals, as new EDBF President, will be to grow dragon boating in Europe, to promote a rejuvenation of our sport and to make it able to generate increased revenues and thus opportunity for our paddlers, for our members, for our Clubs and for the organisation of our sport at every level.

I am fully aware that the capability of any individual is limited, but if we are united in a team serving our sport with dedication, with your support and commitment, there is no difficulties that we cannot overcome.

We must investigate and bear in mind what paddlers think and we must work with them.

The EDBF should be able to set up inspirational goals in line with the will of the Paddlers and the need for development of our sport, and lead the Dragon Boat Community to achieve those goals.

This is one of the reasons to continue in the future with the EDBF Annual Convention and to develop the programme with sessions for Coaches, Paddlers, Organizers and Sponsors.

There is still considerable room for the EDBF Executive Committee and Council to improve our leadership, governing capacity and organization, and the quality, competence and practice of the EDBF Members and Officials.

These are missions of an historic importance to which we must dedicate all our wisdom and strength.

I wish to underline the EDBF gender equality in our good governance policy, with 4 women and 3 men in the Executive Committee.

In conclusion I ask you to launch in this Belgrade EDBF convention 2017 the idea of a European project for sustainable implementation as a fundamental commitment to encouraging and supporting the conservation of water quality to make a tangible difference in the next years to our lakes, rivers and sea training and racing venues and the environment: **THE WATER PROTECTION AWARD**, and I ask for you to support the project within your countries and your clubs.

Thank you to the organizers of this event, the friends of the Serbian Dragon Boat Federation.

Rome 2017, 19<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Claudio Schermi

EDBF President Elect

## INTRODUCTION

The members and observers of the Expert Group on Good Governance of EU discussed in 2012/2013 the issue of good governance principles in sport on the basis of a document presenting national rules and codes existing in the EU Member States. Participants agreed that some overarching principles of good governance can be identified across the board, but that it is important to maintain flexibility and to have a pragmatic approach, with a view to taking into account the vast differences existing in sporting structures and to focus on recommendations that can bring an added value at EU level.

There is now a greater interest (and expectation) across the stakeholders of sport to participate in the future direction and policy-making activities of sports governing bodies and to have their views heard and appropriately reflected in the decisions of those bodies. In this context members/participants are acting more like consumers and becoming more demanding.

For the purposes of its recommendations, the Expert Group 'Good Governance' adopted the following definition of good governance in sport:

“The framework and culture within which a sports body sets policy, delivers its strategic objectives, engages with stakeholders, monitors performance, evaluates and manages risk and reports to its constituents on its activities and progress including the delivery of effective, sustainable and proportionate sports policy and regulation”

*(quoted: EU work plan for sport: Expert Group “Good Governance” - Principles of good governance in sport)*

I believe that the EDBF should follow the same EU guidelines and focus on 5 main points.

## **1. CLARITY OF PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES**

### **a) Role, function and objectives**

The role of the European Dragon Boat Federation is to serve the European Paddlers, the Dragon Boat Community of Europe and the EDBF Members and Clubs.

Quoted from the introduction of the EDBF Statutes:

“The role of the EDBF is to develop the Sport of Dragon Boat Racing on the Continent of Europe and to ensure that festival based Dragon Boating retains its traditions and remains a sport and recreation to be enjoyed at all levels, by as many people as possible.

This the EDBF seeks to achieve without too many unnecessary rules and regulations or too much officialdom.

The philosophy of the EDBF is that Dragon Boating is great fun and a very social sport. At basic level the EDBF believes that Dragon Boat Racing should be organised with this in mind, thus keeping it well within the capabilities of the average able-bodied or disabled person.

The formal Articles laid down in the EDBF Statutes, together with the Bye-Laws, Competition Regulations and Rules of Racing, follow those of the International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF) and are designed to create an organisation, within which, the cultural background and traditions and the social aspects of Dragon Boating are preserved; the competitive aspects of Dragon Boat Racing enhanced; and the ideals on which the IDBF and EDBF were founded, maintained.

The purpose of the EDBF, therefore is to provide a Continental organization for Europe for the general conduct of Dragon Boating and the development of Dragon Boat Racing, as a recognised sport in Europe and to represent the interests of its member Governing Dragon Boat Associations within the IDBF and with other organisations.”

The EDBF Statutes Art. 3 defines the objectives of the EDBF:

3.1. To establish competition in dragon boats that will enable all age groups and ability levels to take part in races at a level that is suitable to their degree of skill and experience.

3.2. To encourage the formation of governing associations in countries where none exists and to give advice and guidance on development where a recognised organisation does exist.

3.3. To encourage the organisation of international races open to all crews, at both Club Crew and National Crew level; to co-ordinate a programme of international races and to ensure the right of competitors to take part in international competition.

3.4. To establish European competitions under the title of European National Crew Championships, European Club Crew Championships and regional Championships.

3.5. To issue supplementary Rules and Regulations to those of the IDBF which are appropriate to Europe and to advise member organisations on such matters.

3.6 To ensure that all races organised or authorised by the EDBF are governed by Rules and Regulations that give equal opportunities to men and women in the composition of dragon boat crews.

3.7. To maintain the traditional designs of the craft and equipment used in Dragon Boating and to ensure that rules and regulations for the building and classification of dragon boats, used in competitions within Europe, comply to those specifications laid down by the IDBF.

3.8. To ensure that all Statutes, Bye-Laws; Competition Regulations and Rules of Racing issued by the IDBF and supplemented by the EDBF, where appropriate, are fully observed and complied with.

### 3.9. To establish formal links and associations with other European Sports Federations and groups”

Our general objective is to improve, develop and implement all parts of Art.3 of the EDBF Statutes and modernize our EDBF governance system and capacity.

#### b) Goals and principles

We should start to free our minds and seek truth from facts.

Which path should we follow? This is the question for the future of Dragon Boat in Europe and for the success of our efforts.

To push forward any key reform we must have the major issues concerning reform examined and addressed from the paddlers’ standpoint, while formulating guidelines and measures based on Paddlers’ interests.

What are they expecting? How can their interests be safeguarded?

Times keep changing, and innovation is a regular feature of our mission.

We need to use strategic thinking in making our development plans.

We will take appropriate measures once we have shared convictions.

We should have new ideas, achieve progress and promote innovation and we should have the courage to face problems and challenges and come up with solutions.

But before putting forward measures we must discuss it carefully – this should be the spirit of this convention, not just of Ec. Com. And Council - but this doesn’t mean being hesitant to try anything new.

The most important thing is to listen extensively to the opinions and proposals of the EDBF Members and Clubs Representatives, as Representatives of the paddlers and of the Dragon Boat Community of Europe.

One of the problems for our sport is the dispute with the Canoe Kayak Federations both at international and National level. At Continental level, we should modestly have open discussions with our paddle sport cousins of the Canoe Kayak Federations but never forget our origins and we should always preserve our identity and our status of international, continental and national governing body for dragon boat.

#### c) Vision and strategic plan

A PLATFORM, based on six PILLARS, represents the vision to increase the appeal of DragonBoating in Europe.

I am convinced that in realising this vision, in partnership with the EDBF Member Federations and with the support of the Executive Committee, of the Council and of the Race Officials, our sport will enter an exciting new era of growth that will encourage more young people becoming athletes and increase the potential audience for our sport.

- 1) Reinforce the Chinese Traditions and embracing changes for a better future
- 2) Improve decentralization and empowerment for the Executive Committee, the Council, The EDBF Commissions and National Federations
- 3) Improve integrity and trust
- 4) Greater focus on sustainability and responsibility
- 5) Greater revenue generation
- 6) Improved solid and strong communications

It is very important to share Vision and Values for the better future of the Dragon Boat Community of Europe. If the Executive Committee Members, the Council Members, the National Federations Representatives make concerted efforts to realized our new projects, we will have common and fresh ideas to drive our work. Each of these 6 pillars is important. I wish to underline that I expect that the Executive Committee, Council and Commissions, even if on a volunteer basis, should start to meet more often, with video conference meetings. I expect the development of new events as a first step for a new “revenue generation” policy. At the moment the main revenues come from the EDBF Fees at the Continental Championships, around 25.000 Euro every year. What if we establish new EDBF Events? And the EDBF racing programme also could be more attractive for sponsors. I expect that we will embrace new media much more seriously and continuously to make our sport more visible and attractive both for new generations of paddlers and for sponsors

#### d) Consensual strategy

Before the paddlers, before the Dragon Boat Community, we are always students. Therefore we must seek advice from them.

It is not up to us to judge our EDBF’s governance capacity or performance. We must be judged by paddlers, by the Dragon Boat Community of Europe, by our Members and Clubs.

We have to be open to reform with a systematic approach to the changes of the entire world of Sport. Every change has great impact on other reforms, and all reforms support each other and interact positively.

We must make sure that reform, development and stability proceed in tandem.

#### e) Monitoring and oversight

Striking the right balance between, on the one hand, trust and, on the other, a structure of rules to prevent wrongdoing, is one of the major challenges of an effective approach to budgetary monitoring and oversight.

First of all we have to consider that the EDBF has a very low budget today, most of which goes to cover very clearly identified costs. Nonetheless we should reinforce our transparency policy and clarify in advance the re-imbursement policy and the budget for the President, for the Executive Committee and for the Council, for the Commissions and for Race Officials to carry out their tasks.

### **2. INCLUSIVITY AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

We all wish that our sport will enter an exciting new era of growth that will encourage more young people becoming dragon boat athletes. To be attractive for new generations should be the main goal for all Dragon Boat Federations at National, Continental and International levels.

About inclusivity, we have to develop an inclusive agenda to involve the Chinese Communities of Europe in Dragon Boat Sport.

We should include in our EDBF Events the Breast Cancer Paddlers crews and we should develop a new para-dragonboat programme for disabled paddlers.

These issues will be on the table for the next few years and we have to discuss them to find new proposals and solutions since this Belgrade convention

### **3. MANAGEMENT**

In most sports bodies, the board constitutes the executive organ providing a supervisory and monitoring role over the day-to-day activities and management of the organisation. The board therefore represents an essential component of good governance in sport. The successful implementation and acceptance of good governance in a sporting body is influenced by whether and how well the board and the management embrace good governance. The board and management should seek to promote a culture of good

governance throughout the entire organisation, for example by conducting appropriate training and qualification measures. We should introduce special sessions in this direction since the next EDBF Convention.

Good governance requires not only individual strength but also teamwork and collaboration.

The EDBF should begin to consider the issue of governance system from a new perspective, and come to the conclusion that the issue of leadership and organizational system are fundamental, comprehensive, stable and permanent ones. It is time to promote the overall modernization of our EDBF governance system and capacity for a better efficiency.

Our EDBF governance system needs to be improved, but we should share opinions on what improvements are necessary.

We should focus on our core values and on the culture and traditions of our sport that make dragon boat a unique sport and distinguish our Federation from others.

#### **4. CODE OF ETHICS**

The EDBF adopted the IDBF Code of Ethics.

Quoted from the preamble of the IDBF Code of Ethics:

“The International Dragon Boat Federation, each of its Continental Federations and each of its Members, the Organising Committees of IDBF World Championships and Dragon Boat Continental Championships and the cities wishing to organise IDBF World Championships or Dragon Boat Continental Championships (hereinafter “the Code parties”) state their commitment to this Code.

Consequently, at all times the Code parties and, in the framework of IDBF World Championships and Dragon Boat Continental Championships, the participants, undertake to respect and ensure respect of the present Code. The IDBF Members and affiliated organisations shall adopt a code of ethics based on the principles and rules of the IDBF Code of Ethics or adopt the IDBF Code in a written declaration.”

#### **5. STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION AND ROLES**

The EDBF has relationships with many groups (stakeholders) which can either affect the operation of our organisation (for example, Paddlers, Race Officials, Sponsors, National Federations) and without whom the organisation would cease to function (or at least have great difficulty in functioning) or are affected by different organisations (for example, Dragon Boat manufacturers and event organisers).

Active stakeholding requires a group to possess: power, legitimacy and a reason to act.

Not all stakeholder groups are active in pursuing their collective interest; aware that they have a collective interest; or willing to accept that they share a common interest.

It is important for the EDBF involve Stakeholders in all our activities and, for this reason, we should start to make our annual convention also more attractive for the different categories of stakeholders

The key questions about stakeholders in relation to good governance of the EDBF are:

1. Is it more appropriate to define EDBF stakeholders in terms of their identity (i.e. as Paddlers, Coaches, Race Officials, Dragon Boat and paddle suppliers) or in terms of their interests (i.e. in elite sport/club success, community/club development, youth sport, Continental Championships participants. Commercial and sponsors etc.)?
2. What are the key factors that enable active stakeholding rather than passive or latent stakeholding?

3. Under what conditions will stakeholder groups be motivated to mobilise?
4. To what extent are the major latent or actual EDBF stakeholder groups supporters of good governance? Are more (most) EDBF stakeholder groups primarily concerned with securing relative advantage over other stakeholder groups?

At the EDBF Convention next week end, we expect your feedback to discuss and share together for a positive follow up.

Rome 2017, 19<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Claudio Schermi  
EDBF President Elect