



**C.I.P.S.**

## *46<sup>th</sup> CIPS CONGRESS 2024*

Unfortunately, I must begin this report with some very sad news that I deeply regret having to share. During this four-year term, we have lost two dear companions on our journey: former Vice President Hyman Steyn, and, very recently, the current Vice President responsible for environmental policies, Abdou Diouf. Two friends who were with us for many years, who faced numerous challenges alongside us, but also shared in many rewarding experiences.

This has been a very particular four-year period, marked by numerous challenges, some of which have been resolved, while others remain pending and will be inherited by the new members of the Praesidium. The beginning of this term was far from auspicious: just as we were slowly emerging from the COVID pandemic, the Russian/Ukrainian and Israeli/Palestinian conflicts erupted, once again plunging many Federations into serious difficulty.

These global events caused a significant rise in the cost of air travel, transportation rentals, food and lodging, and all other expenses related to athletes' international travel, making participation in various championships much more difficult, particularly for those nations lacking substantial financial resources. Nevertheless, this did not stop CIPS from continuing its expansion efforts, successfully engaging and affiliating new Federations from many different parts of the world. I will speak more in depth about this later.

Regarding the Russian/Ukrainian conflict, the situation in Ukraine, which had already forced us to relocate competitions scheduled there in 2022 to venues in other countries, remains critical. Therefore, as long as this situation persists, the decision previously made by the Praesidium must remain in force: namely, in accordance with recommendations from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the temporary suspension of Russian and Belarusian athletes from participating in any international CIPS/FIPS championships. We await a peaceful resolution to this senseless war, so that we may return to normal.

During the past four years, our Statute and, consequently, our internal Regulations, have been updated to reflect a changing world and to meet specific requests received from the IOC and WADA. To give a few examples, we have added several new organs to the Statute: the Athletes' Commission, the Gender Equality Commission, the Ethics Commission, and the Anti-Doping Tribunal. The internal Regulations have also been amended to allow candidates for the Athletes' Commission or the Board of Auditors to participate in elective Congresses without needing to be physically present.

By unanimous vote of the CIPS Praesidium, in 2022 it was decided to join the "World Environment Day" initiative, held on June 5, which involves numerous international associations in global events. To this end, a letter was sent to all Federations inviting them to organize activities aimed at environmental protection, which in our context clearly means aquatic environments. Federations participating in this

initiative were also asked to document the most significant moments and submit them to the CIPS Secretariat for promotion. Unfortunately, despite requests from the Secretariat, we received very little feedback. It will be the responsibility of the next Praesidium, and particularly the future Vice President for Environmental Policies, to continue this initiative, highlighting just how vital it is for our community and for all of CIPS to safeguard river and marine environments and the fish species that inhabit them.

On this subject, during the “Pescare Show” in Vicenza, the CIPS Praesidium organized a conference entitled “Towards a legislative restriction on the use of lead and plastic in recreational fishing?” following reports that the European Community was preparing legislation to ban these materials in the context of recreational fishing, a development that would create serious issues for both companies and anglers. Leading Italian producers of plastic fishing materials and lead fishing weights, along with representatives of Italy’s largest fishing equipment manufacturers, were invited to the conference. The event was opened by Jan Kappel, the lobbyist representing EFTTA in Brussels and following the European Commission’s work. Three Italian Members of the European Parliament from different political parties also spoke, including Mr. Fiocchi, who manufactures hunting cartridges and is therefore well-acquainted with the issue of lead.

Regarding plastics, the new European law targets single-use plastic items. It was concluded that this legislation does not directly affect fishing equipment, but rather packaging, so the appropriate course of action is to raise awareness among anglers about proper disposal practices and to encourage manufacturers to produce increasingly biodegradable plastics. As for lead, the issue is more complex, as no viable replacement has yet been found. Tungsten, for instance, poses significant problems due to its cost and excessive hardness, making it difficult to use in smaller weights. However, the law is still under discussion, which means we likely have a few more years to explore and develop alternative solutions.

At the beginning of this four-year term, the CIPS Praesidium entrusted former President and current Honorary President, Ferenc Szalay, with managing relationships with international organizations that have, or may have, interactions with our Confederation. He attended several of their meetings. An explanatory note on the activities of the Honorary President is attached to this report.

With regard to Anti-Doping, CIPS has acknowledged the measures requested by WADA, including the implementation of an education plan, which is mandatory for all WADA signatories.

In this regard, we are required to:

- Update the CIPS website with new information about anti-doping education;
- Create an Education Pool;
- Develop an Education Plan;
- Design learning activities, as well as monitor and evaluate the education programs.

For this reason, the Praesidium tasked FIPS-Mouche with carrying out an educational initiative during the Fly Fishing Youth World Championship and the Fly Fishing Masters World Championship, which were held in Italy from July 18 to 24, 2022. To implement this, the Secretariat of the Italian Federation of Sport Fishing and Underwater Activities contacted NADO Italia, which supported us in organizing an educational activity aimed at raising awareness and providing information to prevent intentional or unintentional violations of the anti-doping code.

The educational symposium was addressed to all the athletes present at the championship, who were also invited to participate in an online activity consisting of a questionnaire on WADA’s ADEL (Anti-Doping Education and Learning) platform. The questionnaire can be found on the NADO Italia website: <https://www.nadoitalia.it/it/attivita/educazione-e-formazione/eventi/event/49-corso-di-formazione-atleti-cips-fipsas.html>

The educational activity for both athletes and their accompanying officials continued in 2024, when CIPS, in cooperation with FIPSAS and NADO Italy, organized another seminar during the Black Bass World Championship held in Italy at Lake Bracciano.

Moreover, WADA reminded us that CIPS is required to submit a Risk Assessment (RA) that provides a snapshot of the sport. This should include a description of the physiological characteristics of each discipline and an evaluation of all risk factors. The Risk Assessment must be updated only if there are changes in the sport such as the introduction of a new discipline or a new country rising in the rankings.

CIPS must demonstrate that it has assessed:

- its sport and disciplines;
- the countries participating in those disciplines;
- and the events it hosts (identifying which are the highest risk).

The Risk Assessment must deliver clear outcomes that guide the development of:

- the Test Distribution Plan (TDP), including number and type of tests (In-Competition vs. Out-of-Competition, urine vs. blood, etc.);
- the testing and whereabouts pools;
- a sample retention strategy, and more.

In order to meet WADA's requirements, and lacking the internal expertise to do so, we have asked the International Testing Agency (ITA) to provide us with these services. However, these services are not included in our current agreement with ITA, which covers only the issuance of Therapeutic Use Exemptions and the fees for TUE panelists.

As for the tests conducted during this four-year period, a total of 139 controls were carried out by the three international Federations, and thus by CIPS. About two-thirds were in-competition tests, and one-third during training.

Regarding the results, 8 positive cases were identified. Among them 2 are recent cases still to be determined, 2 were deemed serious, and the individuals involved received final suspensions of one or more years. The remaining 4 were acquitted, as they successfully demonstrated that their positive results were due to medications they were medically required to take. These cases were supported by valid medical certificates, allowing the athletes to obtain retroactive Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs).

We must underline that the positive cases are almost all attributable to the presence of traces of Hydrochlorothiazide in the urine, which is considered by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) to be a masking agent for prohibited substances. This diuretic is commonly prescribed to anyone suffering from hypertension. It is therefore highly likely that many of our athletes are undergoing treatment and thus required to take it. However, this issue can be easily resolved: the athlete simply needs to request an exemption from anti-doping controls (Therapeutic Use Exemption – TUE) from either a specialized agency that has an agreement with CIPS, namely the International Testing Agency (ITA), or from their National Anti-Doping Organization (NADO), based on the fact that they are under medical treatment with substances listed as prohibited by WADA.

It is thus essential that national Federations, once aware that one or more of their athletes participating in a championship are taking substances classified as doping, promptly apply for a TUE with the competent agencies.

During the annual WADA Symposium held in Lausanne on March 18 and 19, 2025, CIPS had the opportunity to meet with Mrs. Laetitia Zumbrennen, Senior Manager for Sport Movement Relations at WADA, to discuss the improvements and guidelines that CIPS will need to adopt in order to comply with

WADA's latest updates. Later, CIPS also held discussions with its service partner, the ITA (International Testing Agency), to evaluate the possibility of expanding the range of services currently provided.

As for new affiliation requests, these will be presented to you by the Presidents of the respective International Federations. In this report, I will only describe the cases discussed within the Praesidium and the decisions that followed:

- Angling Cymru (Wales) – Previously, three different Welsh Federations were affiliated with the three respective CIPS International Federations. A new association, “Angling Cymru,” was later established with the aim of merging the three. After a series of discussions, both the FIPSeD- and FIPS-Mer-affiliated Federations agreed to merge into “Angling Cymru.” The merger was approved by the Congress held in Acapulco in 2022. However, the “Welsh Salmon & Trout Angling Association,” affiliated with FIPS-Mouche, chose to retain its independence and continue under its original name.
- Regarding the current situation in Romania, where one Federation (AGVPS) has long been affiliated with FIPSeD and FIPS-Mouche, while another Federation (FRPS) has requested affiliation, this issue will be extensively discussed in the FIPS report.
- After the CIPS Congress held in Rome on April 28, 2023, unanimously rejected the affiliation request to CIPS (FIPS-Mer) by the North Ireland Federation of Sea Anglers (NIFSA), opting instead to retain the Irish Federation (IFSA), which represents all four Irish provinces, we later received a letter from a law firm reiterating NIFSA's request for affiliation. Given that the conflict between IFSA and NIFSA is clearly political in nature, it must be resolved locally and not by a sports organization like CIPS, which is not authorized to make political decisions or intervene in the internal affairs of its member Federations, we have decided not to take further action on this matter. No updates have since been received, so we hope the issue is, at least for now, settled.

Another delicate issue that the Praesidium had to address toward the end of this term concerns the participation of transgender individuals in women's events. This topic, however, will be addressed in greater detail in the report by the President of the Gender Equality Commission.

Regarding CIPS's request for recognition as an Olympic Federation by the IOC, and therefore the potential and much hoped-for admission into ARISF (the Association of IOC-recognized International Federations), it seems that progress is finally being made after years of waiting. According to the information we've received, SportAccord's offices are preparing a questionnaire containing all the necessary information requested by SportAccord and the IOC for the evaluation and selection process.

Undoubtedly, this process will be neither quick nor easy. It will require strong cooperation from all Federations within CIPS, which must provide the information needed to complete the questionnaire correctly and, where possible, leverage their contacts within their respective National Olympic Committees to create a supportive lobby for our application. However, this will not be enough. It will also be essential to have multiple people physically involved in completing the questionnaire, which will certainly be a very complex and demanding task.

As for recognition by the IPC (International Paralympic Committee), although the process might seem simpler in theory, in practice it appears far more difficult and unlikely. Despite letters sent to all national Federations requesting the organization of championships for people with disabilities to help develop a Paralympic program, only 8 responses were received. This clearly shows that the timing is not yet right for this step, even though we are likely missing out on a great opportunity.

Another option to pursue would be to apply for admission to the International World Games Association (IWGA), the IOC-associated body that organizes the World Games every four years. These games include sports not featured in the Olympic program, as well as those not yet recognized as Olympic, such as ours under AIMS. A positive example is our friends from the ICSF (International Casting Sport

Fishing), who are recognized by the IWGA and, if they wish, may participate in this year's edition in China.

A major milestone of this four-year period is that, for the first time, an additional and distinct continental championship was held alongside the long-established European Championships. In the United States, on Lake Murray in Columbia, South Carolina, the 1st American Black Bass Fishing Championship took place. This was only a first step, as in 2023 another continental event was held in Dakar, Senegal, the 1st African Big Game Championship.

To conclude this important subject, it is worth noting that the CIPS Secretariat is in contact with several Asian Federations in an effort to establish one or more Asian Championships. This is especially relevant because one of the main criticisms made by the IOC during our previous recognition attempts was the lack of continental championships outside of Europe.

As for the number of championships organized under CIPS, it is worth highlighting that from 2021 to 2024, the total number increased from 40 to 47 (27 by FIPSeD, 15 by FIPS-Mer, and 5 by FIPS-Mouche), a growth of 7 events, which is expected to rise further in 2025. FIPS-Mer has already scheduled two new events: the World Big Game Championship for Clubs and the World Surf Casting Championship for Athletes with Disabilities.

Also significant is the increase in the number of participating teams. In 2022, CIPS championships hosted 610 teams across the three International Federations in various disciplines and categories. (2021 was not taken as a benchmark due to the residual impact of the COVID pandemic.) In 2024, this number rose to 651 teams: 436 from FIPSeD, 147 from FIPS-Mer, and 68 from FIPS-Mouche, clearly demonstrating that, despite pandemics, wars, and rising costs, our movement is in constant growth and excellent health.

With regard to the new affiliations approved over these four years, the respective Presidents of the International Federations will list and comment on them in their own reports. Here, I will limit myself to summarizing the overall trend in CIPS affiliations: during this four-year period, there have been numerous new entries, as well as several cessations, resulting in a net increase of 8 Federations, from 144 national Federations affiliated in 2021 to 152 in 2024 (see annex).

It is also worth noting that the vast majority of new affiliations come from non-European countries, which makes our Confederation increasingly global in scope and brings us one step closer to our long-desired recognition.

During our 2024 Congress, a topic was raised that is becoming increasingly relevant: the recognition by CIPS of new national Federations from countries where fishing is not officially recognized as a sport. Our current Statutes impose relatively strict criteria for admission, which, for the reasons stated above, effectively prevent many Federations from completing the affiliation process. As you can imagine, this situation significantly limits our potential for expansion, both in terms of numbers and geographical reach.

To address this, last year's Congress unanimously approved the idea of adopting an inclusive, not exclusive, policy. Consequently, the Praesidium submitted, and Congress approved, the following proposal:

Currently, the CIPS Statutes allow two types of members to participate in CIPS competitions:

- Ordinary members, who pay full annual dues and have voting rights at Congress and FIPS Assemblies;
- Candidate members, who pay a reduced annual fee (increasing over time) and do not have voting rights.

The proposal submitted by the Praesidium was to introduce a third category of members. These members would be provisionally authorized to participate in competitions pending a certificate from their government, authorizing them to represent their country and use the national flag and anthem at official CIPS competitions. These members would not have voting rights and would be required to become Ordinary members within a certain number of years (2 or 3).

In my humble opinion, however, and with one year of experience behind us, even this cannot be considered a real solution. Federations from countries where fishing is not recognized as a sport continue, and will continue, to face enormous difficulty in obtaining the required governmental certificate. Furthermore, it will only be possible to amend the Statutes to implement this proposal at the next Congress, a year from now.

In light of all this, I believe this Congress must revisit the issue to find a real solution to a problem that risks clipping our wings just when we are poised for global growth and potential IOC recognition.

As you will surely recall, the last Congress approved the Praesidium's proposal for CIPS to adopt its own anthem, and to award, during official ceremonies, patches to world individual champions and to members of world champion teams, identifying them as such. One year on, I can confidently say that both ideas have been met with great enthusiasm throughout our community, and I am proud that CIPS now brings to rivers, lakes, seas, and fields an anthem that unites and inspires us all under one flag.

As I approach my final conclusions, I would like to remind everyone that, thanks to our South African friends, the 5th edition of the World Fishing Games will take place in 2027. This edition will host most of the World Championships for FIPS-Mer, a large part of those under FIPSeD (Feeder, Carp Fishing, Lure Fishing, etc.), at least one FIPS-Mouche event, and, why not?—possibly even a world championship from our friends at ICSF. It would be a great pleasure for me to see them join our family, bringing the entire world of fishing together under one roof.

Let me close by reminding us all that from this Elective Congress, a new leadership class will emerge. They will carry the heavy responsibility of advancing everything that has been achieved since 1952, when just a handful of countries, in a small meeting in Rome, decided to create an International Confederation of Sport Fishing, giving all anglers a home. That home, which began as a mountain hut, has grown into a house, then a villa, a skyscraper, a whole city and, one day, perhaps it may become the entire world.

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