

FISA Council Decision on Rowing for the Intellectually Disabled and the Paralympic Games

In November 2009, the International Paralympic Committee announced that it had agreed to re-integrate events for athletes with intellectual disabilities into the Paralympic Games subject to certain conditions. The four proposed sports were Athletics, Swimming, Table Tennis and Rowing. This followed the exclusion of Intellectually-disabled athletes after the 2000 Paralympic Games.

In the IPC's classification system for ID competitors, the athletes would be assessed by the International Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability (INAS-FID). Those determined to be eligible for ID competition would then be assessed for "sport-specific" classification; that is, to assess if the individual's intellectual disability has a direct impact on the activities required in a particular sport. The International Federations of the proposed sports were charged with designing their own sport-specific testing. The decision whether or not to move forward with the re-inclusion of Intellectually-disabled athletes into the Paralympic Games in each of the four sports was the responsibility of the international federation of the four sports; in the case of rowing, the FISA Council is responsible for this decision.

After careful consideration and detailed discussions at three separate meetings, the FISA Council has finally decided not to take up this opportunity at this time.

This decision followed a survey of member national federations which showed that there was not yet an adequate number of federations ready or able to prepare crews in time for for 2012. It was felt that this would have significantly affected the credibility of the Paralympic regatta – which would have been the most important competitive event in the four year period for this discipline of rowers. As well, the member federations also commented on the additional strain that would be placed on financial and human resources when they are already in the middle of the current quadrennium.

This decision should not in any way be viewed as a step backwards from FISA's very strong commitment to make its sport available for individuals with physical or intellectual disabilities; it is just a reflection of the current state of preparedness of athletes with an intellectual disability within the sport of rowing.

FISA Council
30 June 2010