

International Sports Federation's commitment to protecting clean athletes: an evolution of priority and action

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'Doping undermines the fundamental values of sport, the integrity and the fairness of competitions, and, last but not least, it poses serious threats to the health of athletes.' Francesco Ricci-Bitti, ASOIF President¹

The health risks of taking performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) are well established in the scientific literature.² While the fight against doping is a global initiative with various stakeholders, the Olympic International Sports Federations (IFs) play an important role in protecting the integrity of their sports, including protecting athlete health. The Association for Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF), which comprises the 33 International Federations responsible for the summer Olympic sports, commissioned a survey in 2023 of its IFs to determine their investment in antidoping initiatives and their priorities and actions (see [box 1](#) for details).

THE CURRENT ANTIDOPING LANDSCAPE

To best understand the antidoping activities of the IFs, it is imperative to appreciate the current context or climate of antidoping in sports. While PED testing in sport was first introduced in 1966 at the FIFA World Cup, it was another 33 years before the World Anti-Doping Association (WADA) came into existence. In the 25 years since the inception of WADA, there has been an evolution in the science of PED detection and the rules and regulations governing prevention, testing, results management and sanctioning. In addition, there have also been several doping scandals that have shocked the world with their complexity and sophistication.

When ASOIF published its previous antidoping survey in 2016,³ the

government-sanctioned doping scandal from the Sochi Olympic Games,⁴ in addition to the numerous Olympic medal reallocations resulting from the retesting programme from the Olympic Games in 2008 and 2012 and the IAAF doping Russian doping scandal⁵: all contributed to a general lack of confidence in the anti-doping system. There was a call for greater transparency, harmonisation, improved governance, security and financing⁶ and for the National Antidoping Organisations and IFs to improve their efficiency and independence.³

Since 2016, the antidoping landscape has evolved significantly with the introduction of governance changes at WADA, improved engagement of athletes and implementation of stricter requirements for compliance through the International Standard for Code Compliance by Signatories introduced in 2018, providing a legal framework to declare IFs non-compliant and potentially exclude them from the Olympic Games if they do not fulfil their obligations as a WADA Code signatory. Also, there was a greater emphasis on education for prevention and the use of intelligence and investigations to inform best practices. There has been an evolution of the science of antidoping with changes to the WADA Prohibited List involving cortico steroids, cannabis, gene doping⁷ and the development of blood and steroid biological passports.⁸ For the IFs, there has been a prioritisation of independence and professionalisation of antidoping practices with the introduction of IF integrity units and the creation of the International Testing Agency (ITA). While progress is being made, there remains a need for better science, governance and education in antidoping.⁹

Box 1 Antidoping topics included in the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations antidoping survey of summer International Federations

Determine an overview of IFs' antidoping expenditures in 2022.
Provide a comparison between IFs' antidoping expenditures between 2015 and 2022.
Understand and demonstrate the changes within the IF antidoping ecosystem.
Generate insights on current and future trends of IFs' antidoping strategies and operating models.
Evaluate future opportunities and challenges in antidoping.
IFs, International Sports Federations.

INTERNATIONAL SPORT FEDERATIONS' EVOLUTION OF ANTIDOPING PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

The ASOIF antidoping survey was conducted between May and June 2023, based on the 2022 IF antidoping programmes. There was a 100% response rate from the 33 ASOIF members, making the findings representative of the current antidoping status in summer Olympic sports. There were six main findings demonstrating the IFs antidoping priorities and actions¹:

Increased independence and professionalisation of antidoping programmes

Most IFs (85%) have adapted their antidoping programmes to improve integrity and credibility by engaging independent integrity units, including the ITA, and increased human capital resources. Currently, 48% of IFs outsource their antidoping programmes to the ITA, which is expected to grow to 64% in 2026.

Increase in IF antidoping expenditure

IFs have prioritised the protection of the clean athlete by increasing their antidoping budgets from US\$27.7 million (2015) to US\$51.4 million (2022). This increase represents an annual growth rate of

6.8% (adjusted for inflation) in contrast to a 1.3% annual growth rate in 2015 (see figure 1).

More equitable distribution of antidoping costs

In 2015, six IFs accounted for 80% of the total IF antidoping expenditure. In 2022, the top six IFs accounted for only 65%, demonstrating a greater commitment of the smaller IFs to the fight against doping in light of the overall increase in expenditure.

Antidoping budget allocation and priorities

Testing and laboratory analysis of samples continue to be a budget priority for IFs, comprising 72% of their total antidoping budget (see figure 1).

Greater emphasis on intelligence and investigations

The largest increase in antidoping expenditure from 2015 is on intelligence and investigations, with an annual growth rate of 53.5%, totalling US\$2.3 million in 2022 (US\$0.1 million—2015). This change in the pattern of antidoping expenditure demonstrates a shift in the priorities of the IFs.

Enhanced focus on education for prevention

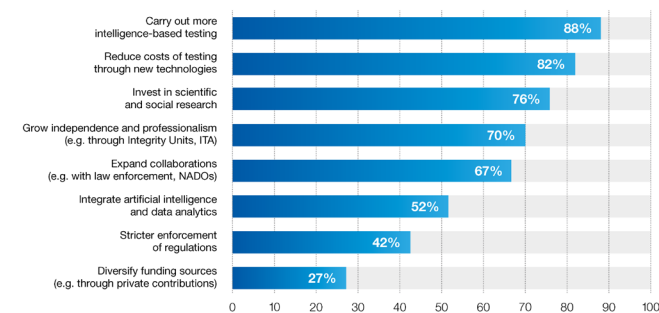
Through the increase in budget allocation, the IFs have prioritised education to prevent doping as required by the WADA Code. The IF education budget increased from US\$0.8 million (2015) to US\$1.7 million (2022).

FUTURE PRIORITIES

In response to queries in the ASOIF antidoping survey on future antidoping priorities, the IFs focused on prevention by prioritising further emphasis on education and a commitment to innovation by identifying the desire to enhance intelligence and investigations and adopting cost-saving innovative technologies. The IFs currently make antidoping decisions based on risk assessment and

Question: In the next four years, which of the below opportunities do you expect to have the greatest impact?

Percentage of respondents, top-two options selected ('Strong impact' and 'Very strong impact')



Source: ASOIF 2023 Anti-doping Survey, n=33

Figure 2 Future opportunities in response to the query: 'In the next four years, which of the below opportunities do you expect to have the greatest impact.' Percentage of respondents, top-two options selected ('strong impact' and 'very strong impact'). Copied with permission ASOIF 2023.¹ ITA, International Testing Agency; NADOs, National Anti Doping Organisations.



Source: 2022 WADA COQ, 2022 ITA/IF AD budgets, n=33

Figure 1 2022 IF antidoping expenditures by programme area (USD/percentage of total). Copied with permission ASOIF 2023.¹ IF, International Sports Federation; Mgt, Management; TUEs, Therapeutic Use Exemptions.

report the intention to make evidence-based antidoping decisions in the future underpinned by advances in laboratory and social science. The IFs are aware of potential future threats, including the emergence of new doping technologies, budget and human resources constraints, and potential repercussions from doping scandals (see figure 2).

Despite these threats, the IFs report being confident and well prepared for the future. The 2023 ASOIF antidoping survey demonstrates the continued and increasing commitment of IFs to protecting the health of athletes and the integrity of their sports. The IFs have prioritised antidoping by committing a budget to support the change in focus of their antidoping programmes to respond to the antidoping landscape and to prepare for the future. Despite the global COVID-19 pandemic and periods of global economic challenge, the IFs have demonstrated plasticity and flexibility, preparing them well for future antidoping challenges and opportunities.

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