

Olympic Task Force – Report 2024/2025

1. Current Situation - How do we assess our present position?

- **Lack of Momentum:** Bandy had significant momentum 2023-2024, but it has since stalled, particularly following Sweden's unsuccessful bid to host the 2030 Winter Olympic Games. The Swedish Bandy Federation (SBF) and the Olympic Task Force put in strong efforts, gaining deeper insight into the process and building stronger relationships with key stakeholders.
- **IOC Uncertainty:** The IOC presidential election (Kirsty Coventry, New President) will significantly impact the Olympic movement, making it uncertain whether the new leadership will be open to new sports like bandy. Additionally, the departure of key figures such as Kit McConnell, the IOC Sports Director, leaves a gap in established contacts.
- **Political Barriers:** Bandy faces resistance from the current Olympic structure, including a lack of support from national Olympic committees (e.g., the Swedish Olympic Committee) and a system that protects the existing seven International Federations (IFs) in the Winter Olympic Games. The IFs receive substantial revenue and are resistant to sharing resources.
- **Russia's Status:** The situation with Russia remains a critical issue, as their return to international sports is uncertain. This could impact the sport due to Russia's historical influence in bandy.
- **Comparison with Other Sports:** Other sports, such as squash, have had multiple failed attempts at Olympic inclusion before succeeding. Lessons from their approach suggest that financial lobbying may not be as critical as demonstrating commercial value and aligning with the Olympic movement's strategic interests.
- **Growth and Development Challenges:** While bandy has established itself in key countries, the IOC remains resistant to including large team sports due to concerns over athlete quotas. Additionally, while new disciplines like short bandy and rink bandy are being explored, there is internal debate about their relevance and potential impact on traditional bandy.
- **Legal Considerations:** There is a discussion about whether the IOC's current structure and decision-making process could be legally challenged due to lack of transparency, accountability, and adherence to its own statutes.

2. Strategic Direction - What are our best options moving forward?

- **Engaging with IOC Leadership:** A key priority is to establish strong connections with the incoming IOC president and sports director. However, any direct meetings should be preceded by continued efforts to build on the substantial groundwork already laid in developing a strong network of support among IOC members, national Olympic committees, international winter sports federations (IFs) and key sports officials.
- **National-Level Advocacy:** Bandy representatives need to continue to engage with influential figures within their own Olympic committees to push for recognition and backing. Particular focus on the winter sport federations and the National Olympic Committees leadership and boards. Regular meetings and relationship-building with key officials should be prioritized.

- **Alternative Routes to Inclusion:**
 - **Youth Olympics & Asian Games:** Strengthening bandy's presence in multi-sport events like the Youth Olympics, Asian Games, and Winter Universiade could create a pathway to Olympic recognition.
 - **Strategic Alliances:** Exploring partnerships with other recognized Olympic sports, such as floorball, to collectively advocate for recognition and funding.
 - **Integration with Ice Sports Federations:** Some discussions have suggested aligning with the International Skating Federation to gain greater influence.
- **Exploring New Bandy Disciplines:** While traditional 11-a-side bandy remains the priority, disciplines like rink bandy could help grow the sport in new markets, especially where full-sized bandy arenas are not feasible.
- **Targeting Salt Lake City 2034:** The next viable Olympic opportunity is the 2034 Winter Games in Salt Lake City. Efforts should be made to leverage U.S. connections, including powerful business and political figures, to make a case for bandy's inclusion.
- **Growing Political Leverage:** There is potential to challenge the IOC's governance structure by highlighting inconsistencies in its decision-making and the lack of meritocracy in Olympic sport selection. This could involve legal action or public pressure campaigns.
- **Potential Boycott of the Olympic System:** The question have been raised of whether bandy should completely separate from the Olympic system and instead focus on strengthening its independent identity. This would mean rejecting the political barriers of Olympic recognition and focusing on self-sustained growth.

Establishing a Unified Approach: FIB needs to develop a clear and consistent strategy that all stakeholders can align with. Divisions between different visions (traditional bandy vs. new formats) should be resolved to present a strong, united front.

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