

## **FIB Olympic Task Force Report – January 13th, 2026**

### **1. Current Situation – Assessment of the Present Position**

#### **IOC Developments and Opportunities**

As part of the IOC's Fit for the Future process, the International Olympic Committee President, Kirsty Coventry, has established the Olympic Programme Working Group. The Group is mandated to review the Olympic sports programme, with a focus on balancing the overall size of the Games, the relevance and appeal of sports and disciplines, and the integration of new sports. It will also consider transparent and clearly defined pathways for sports to be added to or removed from the programme. In addition, broader structural questions are being examined, including potential crossover between summer and winter sports, the timing of the Games, and alignment with the global sports calendar.

One of the factors behind the establishment of the Olympic Programme Working Group may be questions regarding whether the IOC, as a largely closed system, can rely on the EU Treaty provision concerning the "Special Character of Sport." In particular, there is discussion as to whether the IOC's governance model meets the minimum criteria for autonomy applicable to Sport Governing Bodies (SGBs), and whether shortcomings in this regard could give rise to concerns under EU competition and antitrust law. These minimum criteria include transparent pathways for the inclusion and exclusion of disciplines, as well as meaningful solidarity mechanisms for stakeholders outside the top tier of the sporting pyramid within a sport governed by an SGB.

#### **Structural and Political Context**

Bandy continues to face structural challenges within the current Olympic framework. Support from National Olympic Committees (NOCs) remains uneven, and the Winter Olympic Games are governed by a limited number of established International Federations, each operating within defined athlete quotas and established commercial frameworks. These structural realities make the inclusion of new team sports particularly challenging.

#### **Russia's Status**

The international status of Russia remains uncertain. Given Russia's historical importance in bandy, this situation continues to affect international competitions, governance dynamics, and long-term planning for the sport.

## Momentum and Recent Experience

Bandy experienced increased momentum during 2023–2024, particularly in connection with Sweden’s bid to host the 2030 Winter Olympic Games. Although that bid was unsuccessful, the process provided valuable experience. The Swedish Bandy Federation (SBF) and the Olympic Task Force gained deeper insight into Olympic decision-making processes and improved understanding of key stakeholder dynamics.

## Lessons from 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.

## 2. Strategic Direction – Options Moving Forward

### Engagement with IOC Leadership

A central priority remains to establish constructive dialogue with the new IOC President and the IOC Sports Director. Such engagement should build upon the substantial groundwork already undertaken, including the development of networks among IOC members, National Olympic Committees, international winter sport federations, and other key decision-makers within the Olympic Movement. Contacts have been pursued both directly and through established IOC channels, and dialogue with the IOC Sports Department is expected to continue during 2026.

### National-Level Advocacy

Continued engagement at national level is essential. Member federations are encouraged to strengthen dialogue with their respective National Olympic Committees, with particular focus on leadership, boards, and winter sport federations. Long-term relationship building and regular interaction remain critical. Practical cooperation on facilities and events, including cross-federation collaboration at national level, has proven effective in several countries.

## Alternative and Complementary Pathways

Multi-sport events: Increased participation in events such as the Youth Olympic Games, Asian Winter Games, and Winter Universiade can enhance visibility and institutional recognition.

Strategic alliances or institutional alignment: Exploratory discussions have considered closer cooperation with established ice sport federations, such as the International Skating Union (ISU), as a means of increasing influence and integration.

## Broadening International Participation

Targeted development support to emerging bandy nations remains a key priority, with the objective of strengthening geographic reach, competitive balance, and organisational capacity. In this regard, FIB should actively prioritise and work closely with countries that already have access to full-sized bandy rinks, as well as those with the potential and commitment to establish such facilities.

By supporting these countries in developing appropriate infrastructure and by facilitating the organisation of international tournaments, FIB can significantly enhance the credibility and legitimacy of international bandy. Such efforts create tangible platforms for competition, visibility, and international engagement, while also supporting sustainable growth. Identifying and supporting committed local leadership (“doers”) in these environments is therefore essential for long-term success and expansion.

## Development of Complementary Bandy Disciplines

Traditional 11-a-side bandy remains the core discipline and the primary focus of FIB. At the same time, complementary disciplines such as Short bandy and Rink bandy provide valuable opportunities to expand the sport into regions where full-sized bandy facilities are not feasible. The establishment of a Rink Bandy World Championship could serve as a structured and scalable development pathway. These disciplines are viewed as tools for development and international expansion, while preserving the primacy and identity of traditional bandy.

The experience of USA Bandy, which has hosted international rink bandy tournaments since 1987 with the Las Vegas tournament for the last two consecutive years as the most successful - attracting leading bandy players as well as athletes with NHL backgrounds - demonstrates this potential in practice. These hybrid sports do allow for the expansion of bandy into other countries, bringing in new players, enhancing their skills and making them more likely to play big ice if available, and solidifying the existence of bandy into other countries

## Strategic Horizon – Salt Lake City 2034

The 2034 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City represent the next realistic opportunity for potential Olympic inclusion. Strategic efforts should therefore place particular emphasis on strengthening bandy's position within the United States and deepening engagement with key stakeholders, including the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC), as well as relevant sporting, political, and business actors.

A critical component of this strategy is the ability to stage international bandy events in the United States on a regular basis, with clear institutional backing from FIB. Hosting international tournaments on U.S. soil plays an important role in building credibility, visibility, and legitimacy in discussions with the USOPC and other decision-makers. Without such events, it becomes significantly more difficult to position bandy as a serious and established international sport within the U.S. Olympic landscape.

In this context, it is essential that FIB gives focused attention to how member federations in the United States can be practically supported in hosting international competitions, including World Championships. Predictable frameworks regarding organisational responsibilities, financial conditions, and regulatory costs are necessary to ensure that hosting such events is feasible and sustainable. Without this clarity and support, opportunities to stage major international events in the United States—and thereby strengthen bandy's strategic position ahead of 2034—risk being lost.

In summary, a clear and coordinated focus on supporting the development and visibility of bandy in the United States is a key strategic prerequisite if Olympic inclusion in Salt Lake City 2034 is to remain a realistic objective.

## Strategic Autonomy and Long-Term Positioning

Alongside Olympic-focused efforts, discussions have also considered the importance of strengthening bandy's independent development. This includes enhancing commercial partnerships, reinforcing international competitions, and ensuring sustainable growth regardless of Olympic outcomes. Such considerations are intended to complement, not replace, ongoing Olympic engagement.

## Unified Strategic Approach

To be effective, FIB must present a clear and unified strategy. Internal alignment between traditional bandy and complementary disciplines is essential in order to communicate consistency, credibility, and long-term vision to external stakeholders. This also requires coordination between strategic planning and practical implementation.

## Olympic Task Force

Hans Elis Johansson, Chair

Attila Adamfi, Member

Chris Middlebrook, Member

Knut A. Sørensen, Member

Tor-Audun Sørensen, Member