

# **Report of the European Records Credibility Project Team**

**April 2017**

*“You can please some of the people all of the time,  
you can please all of the people some of the time,  
but you can’t please all of the people all of the time”.*  
— John Lydgate

Dear President Hansen,

We have completed the enclosed Report, dated April 2017, which is submitted to you pursuant to the Project Brief that established the Project Team.

This Report fulfils that mandate.

We would like to congratulate you and your Executive Board for showing the courage and leadership to tackle this sensitive but nonetheless critical issue.

**Restoring the trust of the public and credibility to the sport is crucial for a successful future.**

We believe that athletics has a very bright future and that today's generation of athletes can compete on an even playing field and that any rule transgressions will be discovered and duly punished.

We have greatly appreciated the opportunity to be of service to the sport and are on standby should you require any additional work from us.

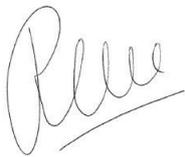
Good luck with the implementation!



Pierce O'Callaghan, Chairman



Bill Glad



Ruud Kok



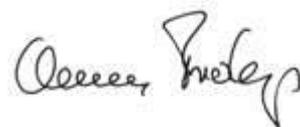
Gianni Merlo



Mirko Jalava



Imre Matrahazi



Clemens Prokop

## Introduction

Objective measurement of performance is a central element of the sport of athletics.

The knowledge of athletes' achievements in terms of how fast they run or how far they throw or how high they jump adds an interesting and valuable dimension to competition results and makes it possible to compare performances from different places and times.

This naturally leads followers of the sport and the public to want to know the very best performance, the record, for each event and category of athlete.

Among the Objects of the first IAAF Constitution in 1913 was **“To pass upon and register World’s amateur records in field and track athletics.”**

The main reason for the world governing body to take on the task of record recognition was to bring order and credibility by ensuring that all potential claims to a world record were achieved under the same rules and conditions, thereby making real comparisons possible.

The same need for order and credibility applies to records at the Area (continental) and national levels of the sport.

With the development and popularisation of athletics, discussion of records has become central to how the sport is promoted and marketed. Record holders are a focus for the media and sponsors and a “record attempt” is an important draw for filling a stadium anywhere in the world.

**But the power of any record depends on its credibility.**

**If there is suspicion that a record was not achieved fairly or the conditions were somehow not correct, people become sceptical or worse they ignore it.**

The history of all sports, including athletics, includes incidents and periods where fair competition and comparable conditions were not the top priority for everyone involved.

There is no denying that abuses have taken place and, for various reasons, the IAAF and other governing bodies have not always been able to ensure the credibility of performances, if for no other reason than they must rely on the work and honour of others.

The sad reality is that there are records on the books at the World, Area (continental) and national levels in which people in the sport, the media and the public do not have full and complete confidence.

**This hurts athletics in many ways.**

Reacting to damning information from investigations into practices in the former German Democratic Republic that emerged after the reunification with the Federal Republic of Germany, strong suspicions of malpractice in other countries and very welcome improvements in anti-doping measures in the late 1990s, the German Athletics Federation (DLV) made a somewhat radical proposal to draw a line under the existing European and World Record lists.

The aim was to start the new millennium with a new set of clean/credible records.

When the idea failed to gain traction with the rest of the sport, the DLV tried again with the proposed changeover to be in 2012, the centenary year of the IAAF, but again not enough enthusiasm could be generated for action to be taken.

Since then others have called for the idea to be revived or made their own proposals, normally just after a scandal highlighting the lack of record credibility. But, so far, nothing has come from it.

As a candidate for the presidency of European Athletics, Svein Arne Hansen promised to address the issue and in 2016, led by IAAF President Sebastian Coe, it appeared that the appetite for change within the sport had increased as a result of the ongoing doping and corruption crisis.

In January 2017, the European Athletics Executive Board announced the appointment of a Project Team to look into the credibility of the European records and draft recommendations for action to be considered by European Athletics.

The following report covers the activities and findings of the Project Team.

## Project Brief

Although the primary task of the Project Team was to examine the credibility of European Records (ERs), it was clear from the start that, as many of the ERs are also World Records (WRs), the IAAF needed to be included in the work. IAAF President Sebastian Coe subsequently announced he and his Council would monitor the project and it was agreed that a representative of the IAAF, Head of Technical Services Imre Matrahazi, would be appointed to the team.

The final report of the team was to be completed in time for it to be discussed at the European Council's meeting in the autumn of 2017.

## Project Team

### Chair:

O'Callaghan, Pierce (IRL)	Head of Operations for London 2017 IAAF World Championships and Member of the European Athletics & IAAF Competition Commissions.
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### Members:

Glad, Bill (GBR)	Head of the President's Cabinet, European Athletics
Jalava, Mirko (FIN)	European Athletics Official Statistician.
Kok, Ruud (NED)	Board Member of Dutch Athletics Federation (Atletiekunie) from 2007-2016, Managing Partner of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)
Matrahazi, Imre (HUN)	Head of Technical Services, International Association of Athletics Federations
Merlo, Gianni (ITA)	President of International Association of Sports Journalists (AIPS).
Prokop, Clemens (GER)	President of the German Athletics Federation (DLV), Director of the Regensburg Regional Court and publisher of <i>Sport und Recht</i> [Sport and Law] magazine.

## Methodology

The Project Team met several times:

- 3 February 2017 (conference call of the whole team)
- 10 February 2017 (conference call of the whole team)
- 5 March 2017 (Belgrade/SRB + two by conference call link)
- March, April 2017 (Numerous calls between members of the team)

Contributions were also sought from the wider public via a special email address [recordsreview@european-athletics.org](mailto:recordsreview@european-athletics.org)

After productive discussions in the first three meetings, and consensus on a road map forward, it was agreed at that the Final Report could be produced submitted to the European Athletics Council for its April 2017 meeting.

The project team identified three main reasons **why** this work should be done:

To ensure that today's generation of athletes are not chasing records set in completely different circumstances

To restore credibility to the European (and World) records list & to **regain public trust**.

## Options

From the start, the Project Team identified the following possible options for the direction of its findings and recommendations:

- 1) Do nothing and continue with the status quo. **(The “No Change” option)**
- 2) Examine the records one by one and remove those clearly achieved by unfair means. **(The “Radical Surgery” option)**
- 3) Amend the technical rules and thereby require a completely new set of records to be established. **(The “Javelin” option** – referring to changes to the javelin specifications in 1980s & 1990s that necessitated new records)
- 4) Amend the criteria for record recognition and thereby require a completely new set of records to be established. **(The “1913” option** – referring to the foundation of the IAAF and its constitutional Object to define the criteria for record recognition)

## Reasoning

The “**No Change**” option was rejected immediately by the Project Team as the brief was to propose a way of ensuring credibility.

The “**Radical Surgery**” option was discussed at length until it became obvious that no matter how suspect or objectionable a particular record might be, it would be necessary to prove wrongdoing to remove recognition.

To act without an admission by the athlete or competition judges (of, for example, a doping offense or a manipulation of the performance) would mean decisions based on subjective evidence. This would defeat the purpose of trying to make the records clearly fairer and thereby discredit the whole project.

Moreover, because of the inherent arbitrariness of the process, European Athletics and possibly Member Federations could be subject to legal action.

The “**Javelin**” option was also discussed at length, including identification of possible technical rule changes that could be made.

Despite some enthusiasm for the concept, two major issues were identified:

- i) the changes to the different events would have different degrees of impact, which in the end could prove unpopular.
- ii) the proposed changes to the specifications for throwing implements and equipment would add prohibitive costs for the grassroots of the sport.

However, the deciding issue was that even with changes to the technical rules requiring a new start to the record list, this approach would not address the possibility that a new record could also be the result of cheating and the sport would end up with a new set of records but the same old set of problems.

The rejection of the first three options led to a focus on the “**1913**” option and a deeper consideration of the process of recognising records, the role of a governing body and the nature of a record.

In January 2016, Ria Stalman, the 1984 Olympic Champion in the Discus from the Netherlands admitted using anabolic steroids in the run up to the Olympic Games.

Following this confession, the Dutch Athletics Federation (Atletiekunie) considered whether an athlete in such a situation should be allowed to keep a national record that had obviously been achieved illegally.

The Dutch Federation came to the following conclusions, which the Project Team endorses:

- 1) A record is recognition of performance by an authority or federation and is not a reward in itself.
- 2) There is an obligation on the federation to be responsible for the integrity of sport.
- 3) When a record is removed, no immediate successor is ratified rather a limit is then set for a new record to be established at a future date.

The Project Team interpreted the first conclusion to be a restatement of the proposition that a governing body does not have an obligation to recognise a performance as a record unless the performance fulfils all the criteria set for recognition.

It is likely the IAAF was thinking along the same lines in 1913 when it approved the Object “To pass upon and register World’s amateur records. . .”.

The use of the word amateur implies that there could be performances that do not meet the criteria set by the IAAF (i.e. those set by non-amateurs).

There are, in fact, many examples of performances that were equal to or better than the current records at different levels but for some reason they did not fulfil the criteria for recognition.

Indeed, European Athletics already has a set of regulations for the recognition of records that, no doubt, have led to some performances not being recognised.

For the Project Team the implication of the second and third conclusions was that recognition of a record could be withdrawn retroactively if for any reason the record had a negative impact on the integrity of the sport.

The “**1913**” **option** refers to Rule 2 (b) of the IAAF’s first Constitution, which gives the governing body the right and task to “pass upon” (determine, decide, agree) and thereby set conditions for world records.

The Project Team's idea was to propose a new concept for records and conditions for record recognition. Advantages include:

- i) "retiring" current list with dignity intact,
- ii) avoiding legal actions, costs and negative coverage,
- iii) new conditions signal **determination to fight doping** and give European Athletics (and IAAF) a mechanism to alter recognition of individual records in the future.

Following the discussion above, the Project Team's own conclusions are:

- 1) Governing bodies are responsible for setting and amending the conditions for the recognition of records.
- 2) A record is a recognition of performance by a governing body.

***There may be better performances that are not recognised because they do not meet the prevailing conditions.***

- 3) Record recognition is a right and task of governing bodies.

***A record is not in itself an award and "holding" a record does not mean it is a possession of the athlete.***

- 4) A change in recognition conditions made by the governing body means that previous records that do not meet the new conditions are no longer recognised.

***This does not necessarily imply anything about the legitimacy of a performance or the athlete who made it, only whether the record is recognised or not.***

- 5) There is an obligation on the governing body to be responsible for the integrity of sport, including its records.
- 6) Recognition criteria should include ongoing requirements related to integrity, which if not fulfilled could at some point in the future result in the withdrawal of record recognition.

## Recommendations

- 1) European Athletics (and IAAF) should **amend their record ratification rules and procedures** with criteria that contribute to credibility of records with effect from 1 January 2018.
- 2) Record ratification conditions should include **ongoing requirements related to integrity**, which if breached could result in withdrawal of recognition without necessarily implying anything about the legitimacy of the performance.
- 3) Any athlete whose European Record(s) from prior to 1 January 2018 are no longer recognised should be referred to as a **Former European Record Holder**.
- 4) When a record recognition is withdrawn, no immediate successor should be ratified but rather a limit should be set for a new record to be established at a future date.
- 5) The new criteria for recognition of records should include:
  - Senior level European & World Records **can only be set in a restricted set of highest-level competitions** where the IAAF or Area associations can have complete confidence in the competition officials and the timing and distance measurement systems;
  - Senior level records can only be set by **athletes who have had a specified number of doping control tests** (number to be agreed) in the previous 12 months;
  - Part of the **doping control sample for any record performances must be stored and available for re-testing for 10 years**;
  - All record holders have an obligation to maintain their sporting integrity after a record is recognised. If **sanctioned for a serious breach of the rules** (for example a subsequent doping offense) **recognition of their records will be withdrawn** even if there is no proof the breach affected the record setting performance.

## Acknowledgements

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