

## Report on the FIL Development Program for 2022-2023

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The 2022-2023 FIL Development Program was a success despite being faced with several challenges. Two of these included significant budget cuts and a reduction in the number of athletes participating as part of FIL Group 1, which is typical in a post-Olympic season. But regardless of these issues, there were still many more positives than negatives, as outlined below.

Just as every nation is a team, so is the FIL and there are a number of individuals who played a defining role in making the FIL development program a success in 2022-2023. Most notably, Claire DeINegro, FIL Vice President of Sport and Christoph Schweiger, FIL Executive Director should be recognized for her knowledge and guidance throughout the season.

### FIL Coaches

Leading the FIL groups was a cadre of coaches with a mix of experience and youth. Ioan Apostol (ROU) returned to the FIL as Head Coach of FIL Group 1, but unfortunately his colleague and Assistant Coach Yuriy Hayduk was unable to leave Ukraine due to the ongoing war. Petr Kinzel and Tomas Kinzel (CZE), continued their long standing positions as Head Coach and Assistant Coach respectively with FIL Group 2. And overseeing the Youth A Group was Head Coach Bogdan Macovei (ROU) and newcomer Martins Lozbers (LAT). The FIL is lucky to have such a skilled, professional and experienced crew guiding the athletes participating in the FIL development program.

### FIL Groups

The FIL Groups have long been a safety net for National Federations with few athletes, little funding and no luge facilities of their own. This season, joining the long-standing Group 1 (General Class) and Group 2 (Junior Class) was the Youth A Group, which consists of young athletes who are either brand new or have very little experience. These athletes trained under the guidance of FIL coaches during scheduled training weeks and if ready, competed in the newly formed Continental Cup race series.

	Nations	Athletes	M/F	Participating nations	Age range	Total runs
Group 1	4	6	5M/1F	CZE, FIN, IRL, TPE	21-24	667
Group 2	5	14	8M/6F	AUS, CRO, CZE, PUR, SLO	15-20	1334
Youth A	10	24	17M/7F	BUL, CZE, FRA, GEO, IRL, NED PUR, SLO, SVK, THA	13-16	1149

### Luge School

The annual FIL Luge School took place October 14-24 in Sigulda. The school was fully funded for all participants, *including* one coach from each nation thanks to an IOC Olympic Solidarity Grant (more details below). The school was an overwhelming success with 30 athletes from 12 different nations taking part. All logistic arrangements and equipment were provided by the FIL. Following the school, several of these first-time sliders went on to join the FIL Youth A Group for additional training and racing. A breakdown of the participation at the school is as follows:

Nations	Athletes	Age range	Coaches	Participating nations	Total runs	Runs per athlete
12	30	12-16	16	BUL, CZE, GEO, IRL, NED, POL,	853	33
	15F/15M			PUR, ROU, SLO, SVK, THA, UKR		

### NF Programs

Funding was allocated to numerous National Federations for specific development related projects with a goal of increasing participation in their domestic luge programs. Budget limitations affected how many projects could be funded, but in total, €50,000 was allocated amongst 13 different nations.

### New Nations

The 2022-2023 season saw the re-emergence of several recently inactive nations as well as several brand-new nations seeking membership in the FIL. Nations that saw an injection of new young athlete(s) into their program

include EST, FRA, IRL, NED, PUR and THA, most of whom participated in the FIL Luge School and then joined the FIL Group for further training. New nations currently in the process of seeking FIL membership include MGL, NGR and TUN.

### **Olympic Solidarity Grants**

Thanks to the IOC Olympic Solidarity Grant program, the FIL was able to secure two grants focused on nations identified as underrepresented in the last Winter Olympic Games. The first grant targeted the FIL Luge School and covered the accommodations, meals, training fees, coaching and equipment costs for the 12 nations, 15 coaches and 30 athletes participating in the school. The second focused on preparation for next year's Youth Olympic Games in Gangwon, Korea.

### **Partnerships**

The popular FIL Partnership Program, in which a smaller developing nation is partnered with a larger, established nation, was again a success in 2022-2023. The FIL supported the program with an allocation to the host nation of €300 per athlete per race, for a maximum of 1M, 1W, 1 MD and 1 WD sled per nation.

Host	GER	USA	AUT	ROU	CAN
Guest NF	ARG, POL, SUI	JPN, SVK	SWE	IRL	AUS

### **Vouchers**

Another popular program that continued this season was the allocation of track vouchers. Valued at €25 per voucher, many nations received a quantity of vouchers based on number of athletes, length of participation and need. Because of the budget situation, the decision was made to not allocate vouchers to nations that have a home track.

### **Summer Camp**

In order to better prepare athletes for the grueling physical toll luge athletes must endure, a summer camp took place in 2022 in Smerzovka, CZE and Oberhof, GER. In Smerzovka, development athletes from the FIL groups took part in physical testing, physical training and wheel sled training. This was followed by 3 days in Oberhof which focused on start practice on the Oberhof refrigerated start ramp. In recent years, the coaches have observed that many athletes participating with the FIL group have not been properly physically prepared for the stresses involved in the sport of luge. For both safety and performance reasons, it was determined that young athletes should be taught the basic off-season physical training skills needed to perform to their highest potential in-season. The summer camp addresses these skills.

### **Conclusion**

The season following an Olympic Games can be somewhat challenging, especially in the General Class category, as athletes retire or step back for the first year of the new quadrennium to pursue personal interests. Such was the case with the 2022-2023 season as the numbers in FIL Group 1 were significantly lower than the season before. Conversely, participation in the first year of the FIL Youth A/Continental Cup Group were encouraging, as athletes started the qualification process for the 2024 Gangwon YOG.

Some initiatives that will be focused on in the coming season include:

- As mentioned, athletes being better physically prepared for competition.
- The inaugural Asia luge school
- Assisting underrepresented NFs with YOG qualifications.
- Updating of existing equipment.
- Encouraging NFs to be more disciplined with advanced planning.
- Increased participation in the FIL summer camp.
- Working with indigenous winter nations who currently have low participation to increase their involvement.
- Increase fall run volume for FIL Group athletes.
- Assist in creating a development pipeline for nations new to the FIL.