

# International Blind Sports Federation Strategic Plan 2020-2024



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Summary

# Introduction

This strategic document defines the mission, role and objectives of the International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA), while setting out the broad parameters by which IBSA functions at an operational level. It reflects the key issues and priorities identified by IBSA stakeholders, which will shape and drive IBSA's development during the next four years.

The strategy contains the strategic goals which derive their consistency from IBSA's Vision and Mission. Themes, key activities and supporting actions will be assigned to each strategic goal, in order to guide us in the effective implementation of this plan and also to provide the basis for measurable outcomes.

The IBSA Executive board met in January 2018 in Copenhagen. A strategic session generated the first input for this renewed strategic plan that is based on the 2014 vision document. It was agreed then that membership engagement in the further development of the plans, would be highly recommended.

We must choose our specific goals for the near future: a small organisation like IBSA, depending almost entirely on volunteers, has no capacity to act on every issue. We have prioritised the most important issues for the next four years and have described this in this document.

# Mission



The International Blind Sports Federation is the global governing body that empowers people who are blind and visually impaired to experience quality life-changing opportunities and social integration through sports, thereby educating and inspiring the world.

Every person who is blind or visually impaired from around the world achieves excellence by actively participating in sports promoted by IBSA.

# Vision



**IBSA**  
INTERNATIONAL  
BLIND  
SPORTS  
FEDERATION

# Who we are

IBSA is the governing body for three Paralympic sports: goalball, blind football and judo and several non-Paralympic sports like showdown, chess, ninepin bowling, powerlifting, tenpin Bowling and torball. For these sports, IBSA develops the rules and regulations and organises championships on an international level. Also we are the centre of knowledge in blind sports, advocating for people with visual impairments and a service provider to other sports organisations.

The strategy we have defined is to strengthen those themes in developing the internal structure and to recognise that there are more organisations and people who could have a role in sports and in helping people with visual impairments.

Defining the added value IBSA can offer, and finding value from others, will propel us closer to our goals.

# Our values and principles

IBSA is more likely to achieve enduring success with core values and a core purpose that remain fixed whilst our strategy is constantly tuned to the needs of a changing world.

IBSA's core values give effect to our vision, permeate our mission and inform our actions to ensure that we achieve the highest standards in everything we do.

- Each individual should have the same opportunities to participate in sports and recreation. Factors such as disability, gender, race or religion should not hinder participation.
- Individuals should be enabled to participate at any and all levels to reach their full potential.
- The enormous benefits to be derived from sport and leisure activities must be promoted to blind and visually impaired people.
- IBSA is an athlete centred organisation.
- IBSA will exhibit good governance and the highest standards of ethical behaviour, fairness, professionalism and transparency and is accountable to its stakeholders for all actions and decisions taken.
- IBSA is independent, impartial, objective and balanced.
- As an umbrella organisation recognised by its members, IBSA must be relevant, influential, respectful and authoritative within the blind sports movement and towards all relevant external bodies. IBSA must be proactive in taking a position on behalf of its members in all common issues that may affect them.
- IBSA strives to facilitate exchange of information, transfer of knowledge, best practice and experience within and among its members. It aims to centralise and coordinate expertise and utilise this to enhance and accelerate the development of all members and stakeholders for the benefit of blind sports.

# Our strengths

IBSA has completed a survey of its structure defining its strengths and weaknesses. The most important are mentioned here:

First of all, IBSA is the sole sports federation representing blind sports worldwide. From the perspective of people with visual impairments, IBSA provides services and knowledge to support them and all organisations involved within its domain. IBSA has a worldwide network which can contribute to the whole Paralympic Movement.

We actively promote gender equality in sports and in most sports, men and women are equally represented.

IBSA is the governing International Federation for three Paralympic sports: blind football, judo and goalball. This aspect gives the organisation authority, a large network and the ability to influence peer organisations to have a responsibility towards people with visual impairments.

IBSA has invested in research in visual classification and shown leadership in this area.

IBSA has built a small structure of professional staff: an Executive Director, a Communications Manager and administrative support. However the organisation is characterised by the large number of volunteers, committee members, officials and others who are active in IBSA and have a great passion for sports for people with a visual impairment. Together with investments in a solid athlete database (ISAS) and numerous policies and regulations, this has led to more consistency in the daily operations.



# Our challenges

IBSA has developed its organisation and its procedures and rules. The next phase is to implement them and to convince members and volunteers to adopt these new way of operations. IBSA needs to work on a transparent and solid planning and control cycle for the different organisations and sport committees. Much of the work is done by volunteers and in order to support them in this important work, we will need to strengthen standardised structures and develop procedures to help them in their work and to professionalise the organisation.

At the same time IBSA has a worldwide scope of work and our income does not balance with our ambition to grow and to raise the quality of our operations. In order to support the membership and the organising committees for our championships, other sources of income like sponsorship and funding, are extremely welcome. In that way we can grow and deliver more support for our members and the blind sport movement in general.

In some cases development projects are not sustainable. Although we see growth in the numbers of countries participating in IBSA events, development projects are very difficult to organise in a way that we do not depend on a single person or organisation who is carrying the project. Cooperation with other organisations like the UN, World Blind Union or others, are not yet structural.

# The environment



# Opportunities

IBSA operates in a fast changing environment where opportunities and threats occur.

The profile of Paralympic sports improves the possibility for both increasing participation and financial support for this and other projects. Media attention is much more widespread than it was ten years ago and public opinion regarding Paralympic athletes in many countries is much more positive. The next Paralympic Games in 2021, 2024 and 2028 are in well developed countries.

Also the growth of blind sports worldwide gives IBSA an opportunity to increase membership and partnerships with other organisations.

There are now more possibilities to collaborate with other organisations such as the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) in classification, the World Blind Union in communications and in development with other experts in the field. IBSA should aim for cooperation but be assertive in demands to others. There is a need for expertise about visual impairment sports (in- and outside the organisation). IBSA can develop itself in that area and be a centre of expertise. The cooperation with the IPC to develop a strategy for visual impairment classification is rapidly improving. This project is a joint venture to address the challenges in classification with regards to recruiting and educating more classifiers, standardisation and improvement of the classification processes and developing the sport specific classification systems. Not only in our own sports, but also to support other International Federations.

Fundraising is an area in which IBSA has less experience. Building strategic relations and joint programmes can strengthen the organisation and expand the activities for people with a visual impairment in sports. Ambassadors could be recruited to advocate for blind and visually impaired sports and for IBSA.

IBSA could broaden its scope and use sport as a tool for inclusion and social development. This could also create new pathways to find athletes with visual impairments in integrated communities.

# Threats

There is a possibility that a sport governed by IBSA could lose their status as a Paralympic sport as every four years the IPC reviews the programme. IBSA must be well prepared for these re-evaluations, have statistics and proof at the ready to demonstrate that their three Paralympic sports are valuable components of the Paralympic Games.

There is a trend in the Paralympic Movement towards sports becoming independent or governed by able-bodied federations. IBSA is currently focused on being an International Federation for the sports and needs to reconsider the reason for its existence and prepare a strategy when this trend is also implemented in our federation.

It seems more and more difficult to attract hosts for major IBSA events. One of the main problems is the participation fee prices are increasing annually. In some regions and sports the possibility to hold regional championships are limited and often the events are announced very shortly before they start, not leaving much time for preparation.

Classification of athletes has become more widely discussed as the profile of Para sports has grown. There is more scrutiny of this area than ever before and IBSA must ensure that it maintains and improves transparency around its approach and processes.

# Strategic goals

Our strategic goals are based on our mission, vision and (SWOT) analysis.

We have defined five for the next quadrennial . . .



# Goal #1

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# Structure and good governance as an International Federation

As a worldwide sporting body, answerable to more than 110 member federations and many thousands of blind athletes, IBSA has a duty to ensure that it establishes sound structures and puts in place systems of control of the highest standard. The structure for activities and events that has been developed in the past year needs a solid implementation and adaptation from committees and member organisations. As the governing body for three Paralympic sports –blind football, goalball and judo - IBSA has a great responsibility on the part of its members and athletes to ensure that it follows best practice in the manner in which these ‘flagship’ sports are managed – each sport must be nurtured, protected and developed appropriately. Specifically but not exclusively for the Paralympic sports, IBSA will give high priority to develop the sports we govern.

- IBSA is an athlete centred organisation and therefore the opinion of the athletes must be heard. To make sure that their voices are heard, IBSA will establish a structure of athlete representation.
- IBSA will apply to the rules of good governance and communicate about this.
- IBSA will expand the use of the ISAS database for registration for IBSA Championships. We will investigate if collecting the participation fees for IBSA sanctioned championships (and distribute this to the LOC), can strengthen the procedures.
- IBSA will maintain compliance to the IPC Athlete Classification Code and the World Anti Doping Code and will continue to work on the development and professionalisation of our sports.

- IBSA will offer clarity regarding the span of control of Sports Committees and the roles and responsibilities of the different bodies in IBSA.
- IBSA will develop and stimulate the competences of the Sports Committees with more and better communication, both through mail and calls and via meetings.
- IBSA will make realistic and sustainable development plans using the local and regional knowledge and broad commitment of many people and organisations involved. IBSA will continue to develop grass root level activities to stimulate sports in less developed areas. Where applicable, these activities will be in coordination with other organisations such as the Agitos Foundation and based on the synergy in different expertise of the organisations. IBSA will also have a role in the development of regions and countries not only in sports, but also in the infrastructure, expertise and governance of member organisations. A focus area for the following years is Africa, as the blind population is very high, but participation in sports is low.
- IBSA will establish an Athletes' Committee across all sports. The aim is that the Chair of the committee will have a position on the Executive Board in order to strengthen an athlete-centred approach.



Goal #2

Building and  
sharing knowledge



The classification research programme is just one example where IBSA makes a contribution, not only for its membership, but for the whole Paralympic Movement. As the organisation with the most expertise and interest in blind sports, IBSA can position itself more as the pivot of blind sports. With the help of experts in different areas, IBSA must build its reputation as the knowledge centre for sports for the visually impaired.

- IBSA will use its expertise and a closer contact with the members for a better view and understanding in blind sports and from there, break barriers and stimulate stakeholders to act on these.
- The classification research programme is a good start, but also knowledge about accessibility and medical issues related to visual impairments, can be the added value that IBSA can bring to the sport community. IBSA must take the lead in this programme and add the value to its own work and that of its partners.
- The experience that is created by the day to day business as an International Federation, gives the knowledge and skills we must share with all stakeholders for the benefit of the blind sports movement. The IBSA website is the main platform for this, but also congresses and seminars on blind sports can be a podium to share and stimulate.
- In communication with partners and stakeholders, IBSA can gather, enrich and distribute knowledge about blind sports.



**Goal #3    Advocacy / Ambassadorship**

Apart from the tasks as an International Federation for the sports we govern, IBSA has defined its role also as an organisation responsible for advocating for athletes with visual impairments and focusing on development. The vast majority of all blind athletes are active in sports outside the scope of Paralympic competitions. IBSA has a duty to enable developing athletes to take part in sports of their choice. We will support the development of sports for people with visual impairments by raising their profile, promoting athletes, stimulate other organisations to take responsibility and use the disability specific infrastructures to support the growth of sports.

- Recruit ambassadors to advocate for sports for people with visual impairments and for IBSA.
- Guard the position of visually impaired athletes and disciplines in the Paralympic Movement and stimulate other (sports) organisations to take responsibility.
- Use multi sports events like IBSA World and Regional Games to enhance the commitment of other International Federations to sports for the visually impaired and to inspire partner organisations to use this as a platform for development and to bridge the gap between single-sport events and World- and Paralympic Games.
- Invest in communications and public relations. It is important to increase the quality of our services, but it is equally important to show this to our stakeholders.

# Goal #4



Service provider to other organisations

Based on the expertise and network that IBSA has built, we are able to deliver services for other organisations. IBSA already delivers services to other International Federations in classification. The pool of classifiers we share with the IPC are also active in sports such as triathlon, cycling, equestrian, and others. While IBSA and the IPC are investing in this, other federations do not contribute to the recruitment and development of classifiers and administration of this service. IBSA will develop a structure where other federations must contribute to this.

- Other services we can develop and distribute are on the subject of disability specific programmes, accessibility, grass root development etc. IBSA will make solid propositions (including budgets) with the specific services that we are able to deliver to other (sports) organisations. These services must specifically be in the interest of people with visual impairments.
- In areas where we do not have all skills and expertise, we will seek partnerships with others to enable us to develop these kind of services. Related to this area, IBSA will investigate the possibilities of the independence or integration of our sports into an independent International Federation or integration in an able bodied international Federation. IBSA is an athlete centred organisation and constantly needs to question what the best infrastructure is to serve the athletes.

Goal #5



Sustainability  
of the  
organisation

Described earlier, IBSA is a hybrid organisation with limited resources in a fast developing environment. The organisation has much to offer to the blind sports movement and wants to do so also in the long term.

In order to help the organisation grow and secure the services we deliver, IBSA will build a sustainable position in an organisational structure, finances and staffing. Sustainability and growth of the organisation requires a variety of sources of income, such as fundraising, membership fees, capitation fees, licensing fees, IPC grants, Agitos Foundation grants and sponsorships. Especially on this last source, IBSA has not been successful. We have not been able to attract public and private foundations, individual donors, businesses or other sources that enables the organisation to do its work.

- In the near future IBSA will establish a fundraising committee which will work on a plan which addresses the above. The terms of reference for this committee should be in place in six months.
- IBSA will establish strategic partnerships to reduce costs and secure the services to the membership and the blind sports family.



# Summary



IBSA is a hybrid organisation: Our core business is still being a (multi sport) International Federation, but almost equally important, IBSA is the centre of knowledge which is able to support the whole Paralympic Movement with specific knowledge and be the catalyst or booster in blind sports.

Facing a future where the first role might be diminished, IBSA should be working alongside other organisations in building up its knowledge centre and in constructing sustainable partnerships...

...By doing so we can strengthen the organisation on five themes:

- Being an International Federation, governing the IBSA sports
- Being the international knowledge centre in visually impaired sports
- Being the ambassador organisation advocating for visually impaired sports
- Delivering services to other stakeholders for the benefit of the athletes
- Building up the organisational capacity and a sustainable organisation for the long term

Although IBSA has limited financial resources, smart investments and a clever use of available and skilful volunteers will build an infrastructure from which we can build our future. This requires good understanding of roles and responsibilities of the IBSA sub committees, the Executive Board and staff.

This document is the foundation for the year-to year strategic plans for IBSA, which will be developed based on the goals described in this document.



## International Blind Sports Federation Strategic Plan 2020-2024



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