

3rd JURIDICAL FORUM ON SNOW

INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS FOR THE HOMOLOGATION OF COMPETITION SKI SLOPES

F.I.S. – Fédération Internationale de Ski – regulates the agonistic aspect of the majority of sports activities that fall into the category of "winter sports" through an International Regulation which constitutes the Consolidating Act which dictates – first of all – the competition regulations in international circuits, but it also defines in detail the characteristics of the competition ground, namely the ski slopes on which the competitions take place.

In the same way, (also) all procedures are regulated through which the single competition ground and single infrastructure, subject to evaluation of conformity, acquire certification of suitability to host a sports competition of international level.

The FIS Regulation is not applied to all disciplines represented within F.I.S.I., Federazione Italiana di Sport Invernali (Italian Federation of Winter Sports), even if affiliated, but only to Alpine skiing, Nordic skiing and combined Nordic skiing, cross country skiing, jumping, snowboard, freestyle, grass skiing and speed skiing.

Bob, sleigh, biathlon, off track skiing and telemark remain excluded and subject to a different discipline under the competence of the respective international federations.

In any case, the single national federation, FISI for Italy, with its own regulation, among others, identifies the procedures for submitting the homologation requests of ski slopes for competition, at national and international level, by subdividing the different investigation tasks between the "National Commission for Ski Slopes Homologation" and the federal inspectors (for the homologation of national ski slopes) and the FIS inspectors (for the homologation of the international ski slopes).

For all disciplines relative to Alpine skiing and Nordic skiing, the technical rules and homologation requirements are potentially homogeneous, both regarding homologation of national ski slopes, and also regarding the validation of a ski slope that hosts international competitions, and in any case, the international FIS Regulation is applied (except for derogations and adaptations required in the case in question and according to the type of competition).

1. *Common characteristics of the regulations for the homologation of the competition fields: binding, relative strictness, evolutionary character. Technical discretion of the certifying authorities.*

The regulatory system on the matter of homologation conceived by the Superior Authority binds national federations in view of the relation of affiliation, in order to guarantee uniformity, equal chances and safety for the teams and athletes participating at the competition.

The Consolidating Act of the FIS regulation is therefore mainly characterised by *binding and obligation*, deeming homologation as *condicio sine qua non* for the performance and validation of the competition.

As a matter of principle, no international competition (World Cup, Continental Cups – such as the European Cup – Olympic Games, World Championships) can therefore take place on a ski slope that is not approved by the FIS regulation.

Homologation represents the essential requirement to register to a scheduled competition, and therefore for its validity.

It is also very obvious that multiple factors may introduce derogations to the recalled key principle. Adverse climate factors (e.g. lack of snow) which force cancelling a competition and to locate within the scheduled deadlines a different location in the same area; obvious safety requirements arisen after homologation; unexpected events such as natural changes; change of the state of the places, etc.

In such cases and for exceptional reasons, a competition may be allowed to take place on a competition ground that lacks all the homologation requirements; therefore it is possible to derogate some technical requirements set forth by the regulation.

This faculty is expressly mentioned and contained in an exemplificative manner briefly in document "Common regulations to Alpine ski Competitions" (art. 650.1 of the FIS Regulation), and it is also foreseen that "exceptions may be granted upon request" and that "exceptions and changes to official technical data can be approved only by the FIS Council" upon proposal of the National Federation and the Sub-Committee for Alpine Ski Slopes.

Art. 601.4.9.1., on the subject on homologation of Alpine ski slopes, establishes that in case of events of force majeure, the Giant Slalom and Special Slalom competitions can take place on another non certified ski slope, provided that it is in compliance with the technical specifications of the discipline. While for Downhill run and Super G competitions, it is foreseen the possibility to shorten the path, provided that a minimum number of doors is kept, and safety conditions are complied with.

Therefore, the FIS Regulation is considered as an organizational instrument of *relative strictness and adaptable content*, since generally and abstractly is foreseen the possibility of exceptions to be conditioned according in the case in question.

Concretely, the certifying inspectors avail themselves of extremely vast technical discretion, keeping in consideration that the homologation standards of competition fields, the perceptive content of which varies according to the discipline, highlight inevitable *evolutionary* nature, provided that the homologation requirements must also be related to the technical-scientific and medical developments which affect the performances and equipment of the athletes, and they must also comply with the specific conditions of the competition ground.

Last but not least, the homologation requirements are also adapted to the diffusion and knowledge needs of the single discipline, thus welcoming for

example requests that aim at rendering more spectacular or interesting the competition, therefore more enjoyable to the television public (for example in the case of night competitions), or that aim at safeguarding the so called "classic" competitions, the exclusion of which from the circuit due to the lack of certification requirements, would constitute a *vulnus* for the entire history of snow disciplines.

A thought must be given, for example within the sphere of Alpine skiing, to the classic downhill run competitions in Kitzbuhel (the very renowned Streif) or to the likewise renowned Lauberhorn in Wengen: both ski slopes do not comply with the parameters, mainly with regard to width (considerably less than 10 linear meters in some stretches and in the Wengen tunnel). The Wengen ski slope is the longest in the world, reaching 4.5 km.

However, it is inconceivable to think about cancelling these appointments, for historic and economic reasons. Only the Wengen appointment is able to generate profits for Swiss Jungfrau stations equal to 9 million Francs!

Therefore the inspectors' work focuses on the athletes' safety and protection systems.

Equally emblematic of the evolutionary character of the regulatory discipline, and also of the vast discretion granted to Inspectors, is what was deliberated during an updating meeting for certifying inspectors of (national) cross country ski slopes, held in Valdidentro in 2003.

It must be kept in mind that, regarding to cross-country skiing, the homologation of ski slopes for national competitions complies in any case with the general criteria set forth by the FIS international regulation, except for adaptations concerning the lower level of difficulty and technical ability of the participating athletes.

During that meeting, the committee formally took note that the change of the unfolding methods of competitions was imposing an update to the homologation parameters of competition circuits and therefore the abrogation of art. 313 of the FIS Regulation.

Nevertheless, the deliberation of the "Homologation Commission for Ski Slopes" seemed to contain a claim about the provisions of the FIS Regulation.

In fact, the prescriptions on the height difference (HD) and difference in level of the maximum ascent (M) are subject to censure, accused to have been established mainly for satisfying the needs to homologate ski slopes in some particular stations rather than according to the actual technical data, with the effect to generate problems during the unfolding of the competitions (excessive height difference between the highest point of the path and the lowest creates complications with the ski wax temperature).

Last but not least, the deliberation introduces considerations of environmental type, questioning that the ski slope's width should be of 9 metres at any point of the path, and introducing the principle that the inspector must evaluate the possibility to homologate ski slopes of inferior width, in case he deems that the simultaneous presence of more athletes cannot in any case generate any obstacle or hazard, in view of the characteristic of the path and inclination.

Another proof of the variability, even annually, of the reference criteria, is constituted by the Skier's Agenda, drawn up by the FIS, which represents an

important tool for acquiring information and knowledge on the necessary updates of homologation parameters. In fact, it is foreseen that it publishes the new level difference indicators on an annual basis, for national and international homologations, provided that ski slopes comply with the characteristics foreseen by RIS and R.T.F.

2. The common homologation procedures

For all disciplines subject to the FIS Regulation, a common homologation iter can be identified, even if it may change according to the particular case, through a procedure that can be summarised as follows:

- a) application of the Managing Body, holder of the availability of the competition field, to be submitted within 30 April of each year, in order to obtain the homologation for the immediate subsequent winter season. The application must be presented through the competent Regional Committee of the area
- b) submission of technical documents
- c) survey carried out by the inspector appointed by the National Federation (for homologations required for international competitions) or by the inspector appointed by the homologation commission of national ski slopes (for national competitions). The local inspection must be carried out on the competition field free of snow
- d) payment of a sum as contribution to the national homologation expenses; the international homologation expenses (including the inspector's lodgings) must be paid by the applicant.
- e) adding of eventual requirements which must be fulfilled in order to release the homologation certificate
- f) issuance of the national or international homologation certificate, of limited duration or eventual temporary homologation

3. The specificity of the homologation relative to competition slopes for Alpine skiing

The extremely vast technical discretion left to the national and international inspectors, finds particular application within the sphere of homologation procedures relative to ski slopes intended to host international competitions of Alpine skiing.

First of all, it must be specified that the homologation does not concern the position of the single competition ground and, despite being a (generally) binding requirement for the carrying out of the competition, the checking and control procedures are not exhaustive.

In fact, every international competition, although being envisaged on an already certified ski slope, is in any case preceded by an additional check carried out by international Inspectors, who must verify the actual conditions in relation to the carrying out of the competition, and also compliance with the safety parameters and the application of the relative measures.

This last check which precedes the competition, is actually the only efficient tool to guarantee and prevent injuries, since it is carried out very near the start

of the competition and it allows identifying eventual specific additional precautions, and therefore to authorize changing of the competition field in case of insufficient snowy conditions or adverse climatic conditions (art. 650.6.9, of the FIS regulation).

In fact, it must be kept in consideration that Alpine ski competitions take place in areas located at different latitudes and with characteristics that cannot be compared among them: for example, if in Colorado the start is at an altitude of about 3,200 metres above sea level, in Finland or Sweden, start and finish can be near to the sea level and therefore, the conditions of the ski slopes must be checked constantly.

In view of what has been mentioned previously, the FIS international regulation states in detail the common homologation regulations of ski slopes for the international agonistic activity of Alpine skiing, in the various disciplines that constitute it: downhill run, special slalom, giant slalom, super G.

The regulation currently in effect was modified for the last time in 2006.

Articles 650.2 and subsequent indicate the activation methods of the procedure for the homologation of the ski slopes: the request submitted by the Managing Body must be addressed to the Sub-Committee for Alpine Ski Slopes, through the National Federation and must be accompanied by documentation, among which a descriptive document of the slope, altimetric measurements, indications about slopes and difference in levels, indication of first-aid and auxiliary slopes, description of power connections and air communication, description of access, starting and finishing structures, indication of artificial snow production installations, distance to the nearest hospital in kilometres, and also statistics relative to the quantity of snow that fell in the area during the last ten years (for Olympic Games and World Championships) or last five years (for other international competitions).

Then the inspection is carried out, making sure that the inspector appointed for the evaluation of downhill run slopes does not belong to the country that applied for the homologation (no conflict of interest is mentioned regarding to slopes destined to other disciplines).

The technical characteristics that the slope must have are distinct according to the discipline and type of competition (male or female).

With regard to competitions relative to Olympic Games, World Championship and World Cup, the following parameters are identified (except in case of derogations, as previously specified):

	Difference in Level	Width
Men's DOWNHILL RUN	- 800 -1100 m (650/750 in exceptional cases)	Min. 30 m
Women's DOWNHILL RUN	- 500/800 m.	Min. 30 m

It is specified that the downhill run is characterised by the high technical datum, courage, speed and risk and the slope must allow to be run at various speeds.

Men's SPECIAL SLALOM	-180/220 m.	Min. 40 m
Women's SPECIAL SLALOM	- 140/220 m.	Min. 40 m.

The characteristics relative to the slalom technique affect homologation choices. The slalom envisages quick turns, with fluid execution and changes of direction with different degrees according to the positioning of doors.

International regulations also require that the ski slope must have a gradient between 33% and 45% (different values are admitted only for short stretches of the ski slope). Also the number of doors/change of direction is specified (art. 801.2.4.1.): from a minimum 55 to a maximum 75 for male competitions; from a minimum 45 to a maximum 65 for female competitions.

	Difference in Level	Width
Men's GIANT SLALOM	- 250/ - 450 m	40 metres
Women's GIANT SLALOM	- 250/ - 400 m.	40 metres
Men's SUPER G	- 400/- 650 m.	30 metres
Women's SUPER G	- 400/- 600 m.	30 metres

(difference in level equal to 10% with minimum 35 doors for male competitions and 30 doors for female competitions, in order to allow change of directions that slow down descent compared to downhill run).

Homologation certificates are valid for five years from issuance for Downhill run and Super G slopes and for ten years in case of Giant Slalom and Special Slalom slopes, except in case of natural or artificial changes to the slope or update of standards and technical requirements.

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