

# TIJL SMITZ

CANDIDATE PRESIDENT  
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION  
OF SPORT CLIMBING

*Climb to the next top - together!*

Brussels, February 10th 2025

Dear National Federations,

It is with a certain humbleness that I present to you my candidature for the position of President of the IFSC. Having been a national athlete, routesetter, event organiser, coach of the Belgian Climbing Team, national federations delegate, coaches representative, IFSC Europe President, and IFSC board member, I have learnt our sport from the bottom up, until the highest level and I have collected a broad view and wide connections. I love our sport and I love the opportunities we create for all to live our sport, to live from our sport and to make the world a better place through Sport Climbing. It is from that starting point that I find my motivation to push our organisation even further, and I invite you to read my manifesto below.

A manifesto is only a first introduction of a possible way forward. The real strategy for the future will be created by the full new board, together with you, based upon the existing strategy and all that we have learned over the last years. Time goes by fast and decisions for the short term will have to be taken soon; for the mid-term we will be able to do a more thorough thinking process, and for the long term, I promise a transparent in depth analysis and preparation, resulting in a different way of functioning, allowing for regular intermediate evaluations and adjustments when needed.

I thank you for the attention you give this project, one that is built on teamwork and will ensure that all are in the same boat.

Sincerely,



Tijl Smitz  
IFSC Board Member  
IFSC Europe President  
Climbing and Mountaineering Belgium Board Member  
Club Alpin Belge Technical Director

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

- IFSC needs a new management culture, a leadership culture based on collaboration and mutual respect, where transparent and open communication with all stakeholders plays a crucial role.
- IFSC must transition from operational to strategic leadership in order to shape the long-term future of our sport. This transformation requires fresh perspectives and new minds.
- IFSC needs a strong and cohesive management team. We must be prepared to tackle the challenges of the coming years as a united team, with clear roles and responsibilities.
- Development must be at the core of IFSC's mission. Our growth should balance grassroots expansion with elite competition, ensuring equal opportunities worldwide.
- IFSC must reinforce its Olympic presence while strengthening its independent events. We need to build a strong competition structure to support the sport's overall health and sustainability.
- Transparency and collaboration are key – Decision-making should be inclusive, involving national federations, councils, and commissions, ensuring all voices contribute to our future.

## HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE THIS?

- Empowering the Board: I will enhance the role of board members, encouraging them to take active responsibility for key areas such as Development, Finance, Marketing, and Sustainability.
- Strengthening Continental Councils: I will foster open dialogue with the Continental Councils and empower them with greater autonomy and responsibility, ensuring development aligns with regional needs and with IFSC's overall strategy.
- Olympic & non-Olympic growth: We will prioritize Olympic development while ensuring continued investment in our core events.
- Education as a driving force: We will support the implementation of the World Climbing Academy and ensure all federations have access to high-quality training programs for officials, coaches, athletes and administrators.
- Financial Stability & Growth: We will diversify revenue streams, secure Olympic income, and optimize resources to maintain financial sustainability.
- Operational Excellence: I will work to streamline internal processes, clarify responsibilities, and ensure transparency in decision-making.
- A sustainable future for all: Economic, social, and environmental sustainability will guide our long-term strategy, ensuring climbing's future remains strong and responsible.

## WHY IFSC NEEDS CHANGE AT THE TOP?

The IFSC has experienced incredible growth, achieving milestones such as Olympic and Paralympic inclusion. However, to sustain this progress, we need a leadership shift—one that embraces proactive, strategic decision-making as well as inclusive and transparent governance. We must move beyond a centralized operational approach and embrace a structure where strategy and development take precedence.

I have dedicated my career to climbing, from athlete to IFSC Europe President, bringing people together, fostering collaboration, and driving positive change. I believe in the power of teamwork and in creating the best possible conditions for everyone involved in our sport to thrive. I believe I can lead this transformation with experience, vision, my commitment to good governance, and my passion for Sport Climbing. With your trust, we can shape a stronger, more sustainable future for Sport Climbing—together.

Together, we can take IFSC to new tops. #StrongerTogether

# CLIMB TO THE NEXT TOP - TOGETHER!

It is an honour and a privilege to present to you, as a candidate President, my vision for the future of the IFSC. It is a vision that I have established together with many of you over the last 17 years; it is based upon national, European and IFSC Board experiences. Over all those years I have listened to national federations, board members, officials, athletes, coaches, continental councils, commission members, partners, broadcasters, fans and Olympic family. All those exchanges have shown me how diverse and yet how similar the needs and challenges all over the world are.



The IFSC has grown, from 2007 until now, to heights we never could have imagined. We have reached a global audience at the biggest stage on Earth - the Olympic Games. We have done so in a remarkable way which can only be applauded. Thank you, Marco, for your tireless efforts! Throughout this evolution we have tripled the number of member federations; we notice an explosion in the number of events at all levels; we welcomed a significantly bigger budget and we now have a team of staff which has outgrown the original building in Torino. We have grown to the point where we need to open up the approach to further development. We cannot stay focused on delivering the Olympic Games only. We have to ensure broad, fair and supported worldwide development. To ensure sustainable growth and spread of our sport we have to invest in a solid foundation.

The pioneering phase of IFSC is over and we entered the integral development phase. This phase requires a different style of leadership, a leadership allowing real team effort with a talented and diverse team. I stand for this change in leadership style, combined with operational stability. As an organization we need to split operational and strategic, the first being office competence, the latter being board and general assembly matters. On the strategic level we need a long term approach allowing for well thought decisions where all possible consequences have been evaluated in advance, with a reasonable risk assessment. In order to reach this level of efficiency we need at a minimum:

- The following appointed strategic responsibilities inside the IFSC board: Development, Finances, Marketing and Sustainability;
- Teamwork with heightened interaction, good communication and maximized transparency aligning board, office, national federations, continental councils and commissions, with good involvement of other stakeholders;
- A President who ensures coordination, communication, representation and availability.

## DEVELOPMENT AS MAIN FOCUS

Our dream goes further than the Olympics. All should be able to live the Olympic dream and all need to dream their own dreams. Grassroots development and high level development go hand in hand, and one cannot be seen without the other.

*Exploring all developmental and educational options will allow us to fulfil the vision of “making the world a better place through Sport Climbing”.*

Continental councils are to be the driving force for development; all continents need to grow. The continental councils need to be seen and treated as powerful tools, with individual responsibilities, inside the full, coordinated project of the IFSC. With assistance from the office in Torino, with good cooperation, the councils make it possible to address all developmental challenges in the correct way for the different contexts of each continent.



Education is needed not only for routesetters, judges and event delegates. Coaches, athletes and policy makers also need to be given new opportunities to grow, guided by an overall approach offered by the IFSC. We also want to grow the competences on (para)medical level and more broadly the scientific side of our sport.

*There's so much potential for growth through education, ensuring quality standards on all levels.*

Concrete measures for the upcoming 4 years are:

- One IFSC board member will have the responsibility of "Development" and work with a dedicated team.
- Continental board members will ensure a strong connection between board and continental councils, and will have the responsibility to establish together with their respective councils the (bi-)annual action plan.
- All applying national federations will have the chance to register at least one person per function to an IFSC officials' course in the next 4 years.
- We will develop e-learning for continuous education. The World Climbing Academy requires a budget and will get one.
- The office, together with the board and continental councils, will focus in engaging with all member federations and offer enhanced member support.



## FINANCES & MARKETING

These closely related responsibilities do not automatically lie with one and the same person, but they clearly need to be present inside the IFSC board. The appointed board members will work closely together with the office, the risk and finance as well as the media and marketing commission, the continental councils, the national federations, and with external experts.

We need to work on the visibility and the image of our sport, using our values as flagships: inclusivity, gender equality, respect, and sustainability. At the same time we urgently need to evaluate the full marketing and commercial partnerships strategy of the IFSC. Furthermore, cost effectiveness in organisation and travel are important focuses, as are affordable participation at all levels and enabling people to create a living out of their passion for sport climbing.

A big and ever continuing challenge is the balancing of the budget. Therefore we need to ensure Olympic income, obtain new revenue sources, and optimize resources. We have been effective with all those objectives and if we coordinate all efforts well this will continue to be the case.

Concrete measures for the upcoming 4 years are:

- One IFSC board member will have the responsibility of "Finances" and work with a dedicated team.
- One IFSC board member will have the responsibility of "Marketing" and work with a dedicated team.
- The board will develop a clear multi year investment plan aligned with the overall strategy.



## SUSTAINABILITY

Economic, social and environmental sustainability needs to be taken into account throughout the full organisation because, put simply it means the longevity of our organisation. Sustainability means having a long term vision and guarantees to persist on the long run.

*Sustainability in all its aspects is essential and needs someone who is constantly evaluating all we do from within this point of view.*

A specific aspect in sustainability is the athletes' physical, mental and financial welfare. This should be a constant focus. However we have to broaden this at the same time to welfare for all individuals active within our organisation.

Concrete measures for the upcoming 4 years are:

- One IFSC board member will have the responsibility of "Sustainability" and work with a dedicated team.



# OPERATIONS

Delivering the Olympic Games remains a main concern for the office, and delivering paraclimbing is until 2028 probably our biggest challenge on an operational level. Inside the board both tasks will be specific responsibilities in order to accompany the staff in these tasks.

At the same time we need to work on our own events. We have three years in between the Olympic years and we control all elements of our events e.g. quota, formats, medals etc. We need to increase the overall quality of the events in terms of sport, show and sustainability in all manners. We need to raise the overall prize money; we need to give more value to being number 1 of the world; we need to substantially grow our continental and regional level events; we need to address the youth development under 17 years old in a healthy way; we need to anticipate the professional circuit for our athletes. We will rise to meet these operational challenges.

To address all these needs, the office needs on one side more operational freedom, and on the other side a teamwork approach - mainly by involving in a more efficient way the commissions, the organizers and the national federations. For example, we need to give commission chairs a reporting responsibility, we need to facilitate the interaction between all commissions and we need an openness towards all stakeholders.

Concrete measures for the upcoming 4 years are:

- One IFSC board member will have the responsibility of "Olympic Games" and work with a dedicated team.
- One IFSC board member will have the responsibility of "Paralympic Games" and work with a dedicated team.
- The office will work on growing our own events and in this they will work closely together with board, commissions, continental councils, national federations and other stakeholders.
- An Operations Review will allow us to streamline processes, clarify responsibilities and enhance transparency (e.g. application and nomination processes).

# THE PRESIDENT'S ROLE

As a President I believe I will have 4 main focuses: coordination, communication, representation and availability.

Through coordination I will ensure the good flow between all projects and stakeholders, as a coach who ensures that a top athlete will be able to perform at the highest level.

Good communication will guarantee a constant information flow and transparency, allowing optimal knowledge sharing, ensuring real teamwork and respecting all member federations and individuals contributing to our movement. I strongly believe in top down and bottom-up together being the only good way to reach the best possible result.

*As President I will be present and represent the IFSC, also specifically inside the Olympic Family where I can count as Belgian already many contacts.*

In the aspect of representation teamwork is key and the full board, even the continental council boards, will contribute to the external image of our organisation. Through this inclusive approach succession planning will never be an issue anymore.

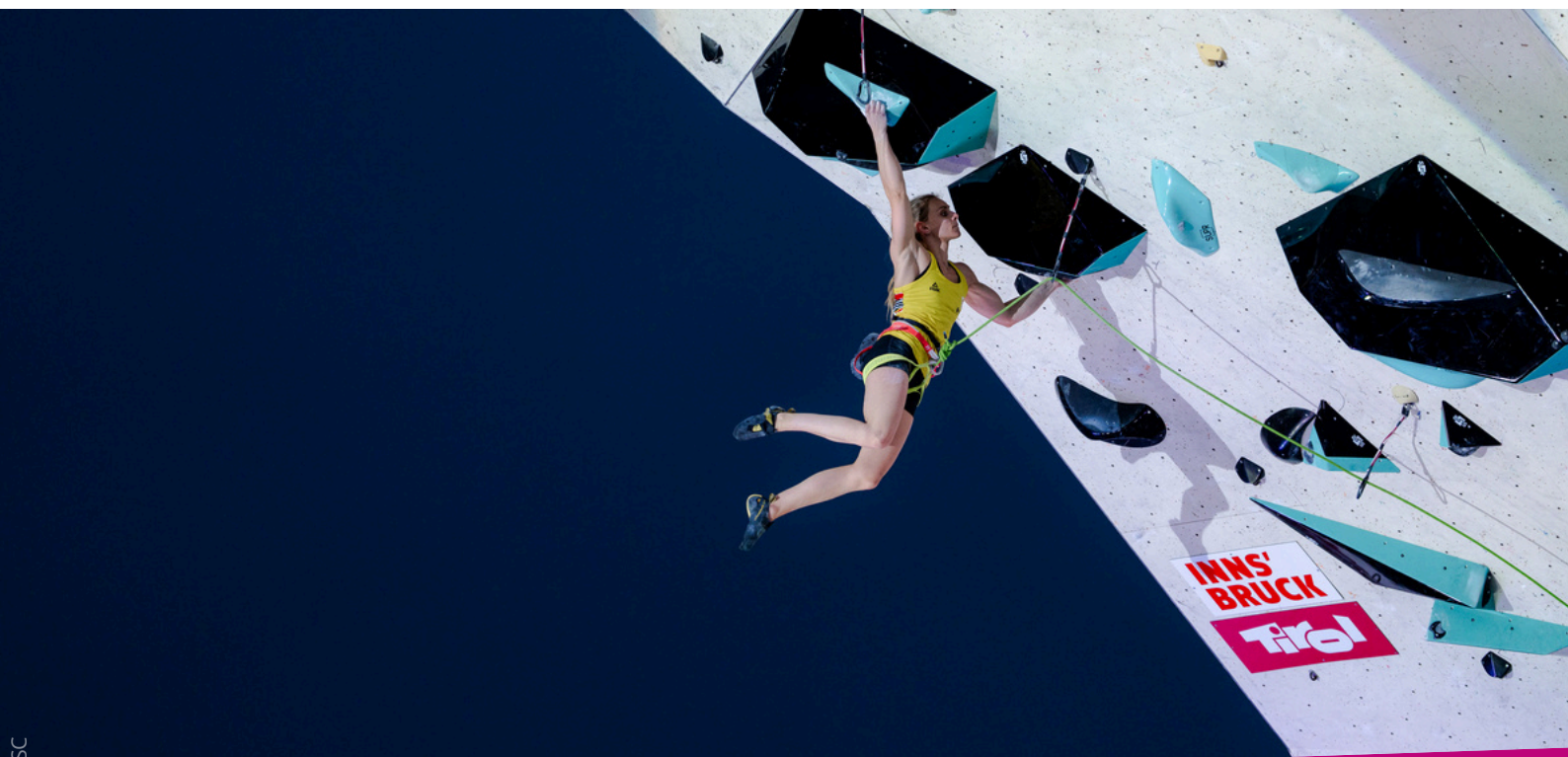


Availability simply stands for a down to earth approach. We are all equal and we all work from within our passion to bring climbing to a next level. All who contribute are highly appreciated, and all who want to share a concern need to be able to address this with the right person. Being available is essential.

My mission for a very long time, whether it was at club level, national level, European or world level, is to create the best circumstances for all to develop. I have an ability to bring people together. I share the vision of making a better world through climbing and through my way of living. Lastly I strongly believe, live by and want us to align with, the principles of good governance as requested by the international sports movement.

Thank you for taking the time to read my vision for the IFSC and to understand the passion and experience I bring. I thank you for your trust and support. Let us climb to the next top together! #strongertogether

Tyl Smits



# CURRICULUM VITAE

## TIJL SMITZ

**Name:** Tijl Smitz

**Address:** Tivolistraat 11, 3001 Heverlee

**Cell phone:** +32 473 44 94 33

**Email:** [tijlsmitz@gmail.com](mailto:tijlsmitz@gmail.com)

**Date of Birth:** 29/01/1981

**Nationality:** Belgian

### Relevant certifications

- Master in Physical Education & Sport Management (KULeuven – 2006)
- Trainer Sport Climbing (Vlaamse Trainer School – 2006)
- National Routesetter Boulder & Lead (CMBel – 2012)

### Relevant experience

- 2001 Founding member vzw Klimclub Hungaria, Leuven (+1000 members)
- National team coach Belgian Climbing Team 2007 - 2022
- Technical Director Club Alpin Belge since 2015
- Board Member CMBel since 2015
- IFSC Europe President and IFSC Board Member since 2021

### IFSC involvement

- NF Representative at GA IFSC, GA IFSC-E and all other NF-meetings 2016 - 2021
- European Coaches Representative in IFSC-E Sport Department 2016 - 2021, interacting frequently since 2012, also in IFSC working groups

### Languages

Mother tongue : Dutch

Fluent : French, English, Spanish

Basic : German

### Other experiences

- Childhood memories : numerous hikes in the Alps with Tirolean edelweiss, Gran Paradiso's capricorns and Weisseespitze 360° views
- 2003 Moniteur de Descente de Canyons (Ecole Française de descente de Canyons)
- 2003 – 2015 freelance editor/contributor - Belgian Climbing Network
- 2003 – 2020 Wilderness First Responder ([www.wildmed.com](http://www.wildmed.com))
- 2006 – 2015 full time Freelance ClimbCoach (pioneering in Belgium)
- 2021 Belgian Certified and active Paramedic
- 2024 father and husband

### Sports practiced

As a youngster 8 years in Modern Dance, later mixed with volleybal, running and cycling but once 18 the focus shifted towards the mountains with climbing, canyoning, mountainbiking and snowboarding. Scuba diving brings a nice calm to my life.