



Report on the FIL Development Program: 2024-2025 Season

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The goal of FIL Development is to provide quality support, programming and training opportunities to developing and underrepresented FIL member nations in both Artificial and Natural Track Luge. The category of “development” is unique in that it spans both winter and summer, so in the 2024-2025 season, support included a robust mixture of season long programs for the FIL Groups, NF project support, luge schools, summer programs and athlete recruitment programming for nations looking to identify new athletes for the future.

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 2024-2025. Most notably, Dwight Bell, FIL Secretary General; Claire DelNegro, FIL Vice President of Sport; Christoph Schweiger, FIL Executive Director and of course the FIL coaches. Their support, knowledge and guidance throughout the season was invaluable.

FIL Coaches

Leading the FIL Groups was a cadre of coaches with a wealth of experience. Ioan Apostol (ROU) returned as Head Coach of FIL Group 1, with Ivars Deinis (LAT) as Assistant Coach. Father and son team Petr Kinzel and Tomas Kinzel (CZE) continued their long-standing positions with FIL Group 2 as Head Coach and Assistant Coach respectively. And overseeing the Youth A Group was Head Coach Bogdan Macovei (ROU) and Assistant Coach Martins Lozbers (LAT). The FIL is very fortunate to have such a skilled, knowledgeable, professional and experienced crew guiding the athletes participating with the FIL Groups.

FIL Artificial Track Groups

The FIL Groups have long been a lifeline for National Federations with few athletes, little funding and no domestic luge facilities of their own. This season continued with three separate FIL Groups, which included: Group 1 (General Class), Group 2 (Junior Class) and the Youth A Group, which consists of young athletes who are either brand new or have very little experience. FIL Group athletes trained under the guidance of the FIL coaches during scheduled training weeks and participated in World Cup, Junior World Cup and Continental Cup races.

	Nations	Athletes	M/F	Participating nations	age range	total runs
Group 1	7	7	5/2	CRO, CZE, EST, FIN, GEO, IRL, NZL	18-26	749
Group 2	11	20	11/9	CRO, CZE, EST, FRA, GBR, GEO, IRL, NED, ROU, SLO, THA	18-20	2157
Youth A	11	26	19/7	BUL, FRA, GBR, GEO, IRL, NZL, ROU, SLO, THA, TPE, TUR	13-17	2508

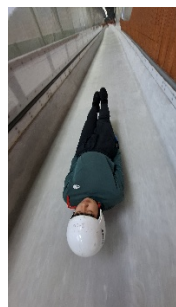
Luge School

Two FIL luge schools were conducted during the 2024-2025 season, one at the beginning of the sliding season and one at the end. The first took place Oct 23-31 in Sigulda and was a self-funded program, meaning each NF was responsible for accommodation, meals and training costs for their participants. Six nations, 16 athletes and 12 international coaches attended. The FIL provided coaching, ground transportation, equipment and logistics assistance at no cost to the participating National Federations.

The second luge school took place in PyeongChang at the end of the season and focused only on nations from the greater Asia region. It included 18 athletes from 7 nations. Special thanks must go to the Korean Luge Federation and Mr. Hyunjun Park, as well as the PyeongChang Legacy Foundation and Mr. Arram Kim for their generous support in covering the cost of accommodations, meals and track fees, with logistic arrangements and coaching provided by the FIL. The support of these organizations and individuals was critical, without which the Asia Luge School would not have come to fruition. The participation breakdown of both schools is as follows:

FIL Luge School Sigulda, Oct 23-31						
Nations	Athletes	M/F	Participating nations	age range	total runs	Runs per ath
6	16	7/9	BUL, CZE, POL, ROU, TPE, TUR	13-17	529	30

FIL Asia Luge School PyeongChang, Feb 23-Mar 4						
Nations	Athletes	M/F	Participating nations	age range	total runs	Runs per ath
7	18	11/7	AUS, CHN, GEO, JPN, KOR, THA, TPE	11-16	594	33



National Federation Projects

Funding was allocated to numerous National Federations for specific development related projects targeted at athlete recruitment, increasing participation, development level training camps and athlete training support. Budget challenges affected how many projects could be funded, but in total €35,000 was allocated amongst 13 different nations.

Olympic Solidarity Grants

Special thanks must go to the IOC Olympic Solidarity Grant program and specifically to Sheila Stephens Desbans and her team and to Marc Faraci for his guidance. Through the Olympic Solidarity program, the FIL was able to secure support for the summer training camp in Cheile Gradistei, ROU.

Partnerships

The popular FIL Partnership Program, in which a smaller developing nation is partnered with a larger established nation, was again a success in 2024-2025. The FIL provides support to the host nation in the sum of €300 per athlete per race, for a maximum of 1M, 1W, 1 MD and 1 WD sled per nation. It is the goal to encourage other large nations to partner with smaller, developing nations in the future.

Host NF	CAN	GER	AUT	USA
Guest NF	AUS 1	ARG 1, POL 12, SUI 1	SWE 4, NOR 1	JPN 1, PUR 1, SVK 9

Vouchers

Another popular and successful program that continued this season was the allocation of track vouchers. Valued at €25 per voucher, most nations received a quantity of vouchers based on number of athletes, length of participation and need. The program focuses on nations that do not have a track of their own.

Summer Camp

To better prepare athletes for winter training and competition, a summer camp took place in July 2024 in Cheile Gradistei, ROU, for development athletes from the FIL Group nations. Activities included physical testing, physical training, start practice and roller sled training. In recent years, the coaches have observed that many athletes participating in the FIL Groups have not been physically prepared for the stresses involved during in-season training/racing. For both safety and performance reasons, it was determined that young athletes should be taught the basic off-season physical training skills needed for them to perform to their highest potential. The summer camp addresses these concerns and will continue to be a priority in a well-balanced, year-round training program for FIL Group athletes.

Natural Track

The FIL Natural Track Group had an eclectic mix of nations and athletes this year, with 16 athletes from 5 nations participating in training and racing. The team was led by coach Jack Leslie (NZL), who soloed this year after working as assistant coach with Christina Götschl during the 2023-2024 season. The USA team in particular is to be commended as they represented the largest contingent within the FIL Group with 5 athletes taking part in virtually every week of the season, including World Cup, Junior World Cup and World Championship competitions. The FIL provided significant subsidies to participating nations to help offset their training costs.



Conclusion

While budget issues continue to be a challenge to available FIL Development support, significant effort is made to distribute the limited funds to development level nations in the most equitable way and where it can have the most impact. The Nordic Cup project, conducted jointly by NOR and SWE, is a good example of countries working together to promote the sport of luge in their home region.

Athletes identified for future participation can of course travel and train independently under the guidance of their own qualified coach. However, for many nations the best option is the FIL Group, where athletes learn under the guidance of experienced coaches at no cost for coaching and ground transportation. Moving forward, the focus of the FIL Groups will be professionalism, commitment and accountability:

Professionalism: Athletes will be expected to act and train as world class athletes.

Commitment: athletes will be required to participate in scheduled training weeks in order to gain the experience necessary to perform safely and competently as they move from Youth to Junior to General Class. They will also be encouraged to participate in the full season of activities, rather than just occasional weeks.

Accountability: athletes will be expected to adhere to a structured off-season training and conditioning program. Physical testing will take place at the beginning and end of each season to ensure athletes are prepared to train and race to their highest potential during the winter sliding season.

It does not appear that the current levels of available support through FIL Development will increase anytime soon. All nations are strongly encouraged to seek out their own funding sources either through sponsorship, government or other means of support.

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

- Assist new and development level nations with athlete identification through summer recruitment clinics.
- Encourage and oversee off season physical training of FIL Group athletes to be better prepared physically for the season.
- Continue updating the current supply of FIL equipment.
- Encourage NFs to be more disciplined with advanced planning.
- Focused participation in the FIL summer camp.
- Work 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.
- Standardized coaches training for developing nations.
- Maximize programming opportunities that have minimal impact on the FIL budget