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Age Limit in Olympic Boxing

Subject: Proposal for discussion on the age limit in Olympic Boxing – Request for inclusion on the Congress agenda

Dear members of World Boxing,

The Royal Belgium Boxing Federation would like to raise an important point of discussion regarding the current age limit regulation in Olympic-style boxing.

According to Article 42 "Age Limit" of the Olympic Charter:
"There may be no age limit for competitors in the Olympic Games other than as prescribed in the competition rules of an IF as approved by the IOC Executive Board."

We fully understand and support the need for strict medical and safety standards in a "risk-to-life" sport such as boxing. However, we respectfully question whether chronological age alone is an accurate or fair indicator of a boxer's health, fitness or ability to perform safely at the elite level.
We therefore propose that eligibility be based on verified medical fitness rather than age. All athletes should be given an equal opportunity to demonstrate their health status through the medical procedures already prescribed by World Boxing, supplemented - where appropriate - by additional examinations such as advanced neurological assessments (e.g. brain scans) for boxers above the current age limit as an example.

If a boxer can successfully meet these medical and performance requirements, we believe that exclusion based solely on age may not align with the Olympic ideals of fairness, inclusion, and non-discrimination. As stated in the Olympic Charter, one of the missions of the IOC is *"to act against any form of discrimination affecting the Olympic Movement."*

It is important to note that, following a review of all Summer Olympic sports, boxing is currently the only discipline with an explicit age limit for participation.
In all other sports, athletes are allowed to compete regardless of age, provided they meet the necessary medical and performance-related standards.
This makes boxing an exception within the Olympic framework and, in our view, an opportunity to take a leading role in the development of a more equitable and evidence-based approach.

In accordance with Article 7.17 of the World Boxing Statutes – subsequent additions - we hereby submit this written proposal prior to the start of the upcoming Congress and respectfully request that the topic “Review of the Age Limit in Olympic-Style Boxing” be added to the Congress agenda.
We are convinced that this discussion is both timely and relevant to the further development of our sport and its alignment with Olympic values.

As World Boxing continues on its path to full recognition by the IOC, we are confident that an open and fact-based dialogue on this issue reflects the federation’s commitment to the well-being of athletes, equality and equal opportunities.

We thank you for your attention and look forward to the opportunity to engage constructively on this topic during the upcoming Congress.

Yours in boxing
Norbert Keller
President Royal Belgian Boxing Federation

Ibrahim Emsallak
World Boxing – Voting Delegate

Royal Belgian Boxing Federation