

European Taekwondo Union
Hofestatt 13, D- 57439 Attendorn | Germany

Copy to:

Swedish Taekwondo Federation (Svenska Taekwondoförbundet, STF)
Swedish Taekwondo Union (Svenska Taekwondo Unionen, STU)

Subject: Formal Complaint of Violations Against the Statutes and Values of the Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet, RF), the European Taekwondo Union (ETU) Statutes, the World Taekwondo (WT) Safeguarding Policy, the World Taekwondo Code of Ethics and the rights of the child as set forth in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Date: 2023-11-19

To the Board of the European Taekwondo Union (ETU), to the Board to the Swedish Taekwondo Federation (Svenska Taekwondoförbundet, STF) and to the Board to the Swedish Taekwondo Union (Svenska Taekwondo Unionen, STU)

I, Djordje Rafailovic, as the parent of Ekatarina Rafailovic, hereby submit a formal complaint regarding the Swedish Taekwondo Union (STU) for alleged violations against the statutes and values of the Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet, RF), the European Taekwondo Union (ETU) Statutes, the World Taekwondo (WT) Safeguarding Policy, the World Taekwondo Code of Ethics, and the rights of the child as set forth in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). I believe that the actions of STU, especially in connection with the team selection for the European Championships, have been in conflict with several chapters of the RF's statutes, in conflict with several chapters of the European Taekwondo Union (ETU) Statutes, effective as of September 1, 2021, in conflict with several chapters of the World Taekwondo (WT) Safeguarding Policy, as of December 5, 2019, violations against the World Taekwondo Code of Ethics, effective as of December 5, 2019, and in conflict with several principles enshrined in the CRC, which has led to injustice and harm to my daughter and other involved parties.

Violations of the Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet, RF) Statutes:

Firstly, according to chapter 1 (1 § second paragraph), STU has failed to promote the purpose of sports to provide joy, well-being, and opportunities for development. The exclusion of Ekatarina Rafailovic from the team has been deeply detrimental to her well-being and contradicts the inclusive nature of sports.

- **Joy and Community:** One of the cornerstones of the sports movement's operating idea is that sports should be conducted for joy and community. In the current case, Ekatarina Rafailovic, despite her commitment and successes, has been unexpectedly excluded from the national team 10 days before the European Championships without transparent reasons, leading to significant mental stress and a feeling of exclusion.

Secondly, by ignoring the value base described in chapter 1 (1 § last paragraph), STU has failed to maintain democracy and participation, everyone's right to be involved, and fair play. These violations undermine the fundamental principles that the sports movement cherishes.

- **Democracy and Participation:** Democratic processes and participation have been undermined through a non-transparent decision-making process where decisions have been made without insight or the possibility for the affected parties, including athletes and their parents, to participate in or influence the process. This contradicts the principle of association democracy and participation.
- **Everyone's Right to Be Involved:** The decision to exclude Ekatarina from the national team seems to have been made without considering her conditions and performances, which questions the principle of everyone's right to be involved and that sports should be open to all regardless of performance and background.
- **Fair Play:** Violations against the principle of fair play have arisen when STU's own criteria for national team selection have not been followed, and poor sports and administrative decisions have been made, affecting athletes' opportunities for fair competition.

I particularly point out STU's lack of supervision and inaction against the former board of Mudo Team Academy IF, which breaks the obligations stated in chapter 8 1 § and 5 §. The former board's failure to follow these statutes indicates a serious disregard for the value base of sports and democratic processes.

Additional concerns are raised by STU's possible negligence of chapter 10, especially regarding union membership and the obligation to conduct operations in harmony with the RF's operational idea, vision, and value base (10 chapter 2 § 3). STU's decisions and its handling of the team selection for the European Championships seem to be in conflict with these principles.

I also fear that STU may have violated the disciplinary matters described in chapter 14, especially the sections concerning punishment for failure to pay fees, absence from competitions without valid reasons, and behavior that damages the reputation of sports (14 chapter 2 § 13). STU's lack of action against the former board of Mudo Team Academy IF, and its handling of the violations, should be scrutinized carefully.

Given the serious and complex nature of these allegations, I see the necessity for the Sports Ombudsman (*'Idrottsombudsmannen'*) to become involved according to chapter 2, section 9 § of the RF's statutes, to ensure a fair and independent review and safeguarding of Ekatarina Rafailovic's rights.

Violations of the European Taekwondo Union Statutes:

Article 2.1 Objective: STU's actions, particularly regarding the exclusion of my daughter from the national team, appear to contradict the ETU's mandate to promote Taekwondo, undermining the objective to strengthen the bonds between members and notify the ETU of any disputes.

Article 2.2 Principles: The lack of fair play and the presence of harassment in STU's treatment towards my daughter challenge the principles upheld by the ETU, including providing a harassment-free sport environment and supporting gender equality.

Article 8 Member National Associations: The STU's actions may contravene the ETU's expectation for MNAs to send competitors to CU-promoted Championships and delegates to the General Assembly, as the unjust exclusion of athletes can impact the MNA's ability to participate effectively.

Article 13 Reporting Wrongdoing: If STU has failed to report any form of wrongdoing within its organization or to take action against such, it would be in violation of the ETU's statutes that call for transparency and integrity.

Article 14 Disciplinary Actions: The actions or inactions of STU, if found to be in breach of the CU rules and regulations, may require investigation and appropriate penalties as per ETU's authority on disciplinary actions.

Violations of World Taekwondo Safeguarding Policy:

Psychological Abuse: The abrupt and non-transparent exclusion of Ekatarina from the national team contravenes the WT's commitment to protect athletes from psychological abuse, as defined by acts that diminish a sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth. This action has undeniably caused Ekatarina considerable distress and detriment to her mental wellbeing.

Neglect: STU's failure to provide a clear rationale for Ekatarina's exclusion and to ensure adequate communication about such a critical decision reflects a neglectful disregard for her welfare as an athlete, which is inconsistent with WT's definition of neglect, especially concerning athlete safety and well-being.

Discrimination and Lack of Fair Process: The lack of a transparent selection process and the exclusion without an objective assessment are discriminatory and undermine the principles of fair play and equality, which WT emphasizes as crucial to the integrity of Taekwondo.

Breach of Confidentiality and Right to Fair Process: If allegations against other members of the Mudo Team Academy IF were improperly handled, this may constitute a breach of the confidential and fair process that WT safeguards policy upholds.

The impact of these violations on Ekatarina is profound, aligning with the WT Safeguarding Policy's acknowledgment of the serious negative impacts harassment and abuse have on

athletes. It is my understanding that STU has not only failed to prevent these abuses but also neglected to respond appropriately and swiftly, further exacerbating the harm done.

Furthermore, the WT policy explicitly encourages whistle-blowers to speak up and the protection of their anonymity. It is crucial to investigate whether STU has discouraged such disclosures, thereby failing to comply with this aspect of the policy and potentially allowing the continuation of harmful practices.

Violations of World Taekwondo Code of Ethics:

Ban on Discrimination (Article 5.A): The conduct of STU and its representatives towards my daughter suggests discriminatory actions that have overlooked her skills and contributions, directly impacting her opportunity for fair participation. This is contrary to WT's stance on discrimination and equal opportunity for athletes.

Integrity of Sport (Article 6.A): The opaque nature of the selection process and the subsequent exclusion of Ekatarina from the national team without a transparent and fair evaluation process challenge the integrity of the sport and the principle of fair play endorsed by WT.

Conflicts of Interest (Article 8): There are concerns that personal biases and unresolved conflicts may have influenced the decision-making process regarding the team selection, which could constitute a conflict of interest, undermining the impartiality required by WT Officials.

Conduct towards Government and Private Organizations (Article 4): The STU's actions may not have remained politically neutral or acted in a manner compatible with their responsibility to foster a respectful and integrity-driven environment.

Confidentiality (Article 9): If any confidential information regarding Ekatarina's performance or selection criteria was disclosed without proper authorization, it would constitute a breach of the ethical confidentiality expected of WT Officials.

Fundamental rights of WT Participants (Article 5): The failure to provide a safe and supportive sport environment and the presence of harassment, whether physical, moral, psychological, professional, or sexual, violates the participants' rights under the WT Code of Ethics.

In the light of these concerns, it is evident that there is a pressing need for a comprehensive review of STU's adherence to the World Taekwondo Code of Ethics. The alleged actions by STU not only tarnish the reputation of Taekwondo but also could potentially cause harm to the athletes and participants involved.

In addition to the outlined concerns in the formal complaint against the actions of the Swedish Taekwondo Union (STU), there are significant implications regarding the rights of the child as set forth in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This

international treaty recognizes the human rights of children, defined as any human under the age of 18, and outlines the obligations of states to ensure those rights.

The actions of STU, as described in attachment 1, appear to be in direct violation of several principles enshrined in the CRC:

1. **The Right to Participate Fully in Cultural and Artistic Life** (Article 31 of the CRC): By excluding Ekatarina Rafailovic from the national team without a transparent and justified process, STU has denied her the right to participate fully in cultural life and activities, such as sports, which are crucial for her personal development and the realization of her full potential.
2. **The Right to be Heard** (Article 12 of the CRC): The apparent lack of a clear and fair selection process for the national team, along with the failure to communicate effectively with affected athletes and their parents, disregards the right of the child to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, and the requirement that those views be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.
3. **The Best Interests of the Child** (Article 3 of the CRC): All actions concerning children, whether taken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities, or legislative bodies, must prioritize the best interests of the child. The actions and decisions of STU, as outlined, suggest a disregard for this principle, resulting in psychological harm and undue stress to the child athletes involved.
4. **Protection from Discrimination** (Article 2 of the CRC): The CRC stipulates that children should be protected from any form of discrimination and that states shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children are safeguarded against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of their parents or family members. The non-transparent and possibly biased exclusion of Ekatarina from the national team raises concerns of discriminatory treatment.
5. **The Right to Leisure, Play, and Recreation** (Article 31 of the CRC): The CRC recognizes the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child, and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. The reported actions of STU undermine this right by creating an environment of exclusion and stress, which is detrimental to the spirit of play and recreation.

In light of these concerns, it is crucial to consider the impact of STU's actions on the rights of Ekatarina Rafailovic as a child athlete. The Swedish Sports Confederation and the European Taekwondo Union are urged to ensure that any investigation or resolution process is carried out with full regard to the principles and obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to not only address the alleged violations but to also reinforce the commitment to the protection and promotion of children's rights in sports.

We expect that the Taekwondo Federation (Svenska Taekwondoförbundet, STF), the Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet, RF) and the European Taekwondo Union (ETU) will take immediate action to ensure these violations are addressed, fostering an atmosphere where the tenets of Taekwondo, including self-discipline, self-respect, and respect for others, are upheld to the highest standard.

The STU's actions have seemingly failed to comply with not only the Swedish Sports Confederation and World Taekwondo regulations but also with those set forth by the European Taekwondo Union. Such disregard for multiple governing bodies' statutes and ethical guidelines calls for an immediate and thorough investigation to restore the integrity of the sport and uphold the rights and well-being of all athletes, including my daughter, Ekatarina Rafailovic.

With kind regards,

Djordje Rafailovic
Father to Ekatarina Rafailovic

Attachments:

Detailed description of the sequence of events

Attachment 1 to the Formal Complaint – Sequence of Events regarding Ekatarina Rafailovic:

I am writing to detail a series of events that have given rise to the current situation and which form the basis for our request for the reconsideration of decisions within the Swedish Taekwondo Union (STU).

This account is on behalf of my 12-year-old daughter, Ekatarina Rafailovic, who is a passionate taekwondo practitioner. Unfortunately, there have been some troubling events that I wish to bring to attention.

Ekatarina has been practicing taekwondo for seven years and has been participating in Poomsae competitions since April 25, 2021. At her first competition in Loja, Finland, she distinguished herself by winning three medals and a trophy for the best performance during the event. In 2022, she learned about the criteria for selection to the Swedish Poomsae National Team, according to the guidelines of the Swedish Taekwondo Union (STU). These guidelines state that practitioners must place among the top three positions in national competitions to qualify for national team selection. In addition, pair and team formations, beyond the current ranking, can be formed and selected by the national team coach. It is also a requirement that practitioners participate in mandatory selection camps and compete in a designated selection competition to confirm their place on the national team.

To achieve these goals, Ekatarina participated in all local competitions, including the Swedish Cups and Swedish Championships, as well as national team camps, with a disciplined and determined attitude. She intensified her training and participated in all available competitions to ensure a place on the national team. During competitions in Helsingborg on November 20, 2022, she won gold both individually and in pairs. She continued to perform at her best, with additional gold in Trollhättan on December 11, 2022, and a silver in the team category during the Nordic Championships in Helsinki, together with Lilly Toth and Maja Bergström on January 22, 2023. In Loja, Finland, on March 11, 2023, she was the second-best Swedish participant and during a competition in Denmark on June 3, 2023, she secured an individual bronze medal as well as silver in pairs.

In the summer of 2023, Maja Bergström, Lilly Toth, and Ekatarina were selected for the national team to compete in the Poomsae European Championship in November in Innsbruck, in the Poomsae girl cadet team category, all three affiliated with Mudo Team Academy IF.

The problems began when Maja repeatedly expressed that she no longer found joy in taekwondo and wanted to end her training. Despite her parents' wishes for her to continue, Maja neglected her training sessions and openly displayed her dissatisfaction. This led to conflicts within the team and with her coach, who demanded her commitment during training sessions. At this time, Maja's parents were board members of Mudo Team Academy IF.

Myself and Lilly's mother considered the situation unsustainable, and a meeting with Maja and her father was held to discuss the issues. At this meeting, I emphasized that I did not

want my daughter to compete on a team where not all members were giving their best, as it was not advantageous for my daughter's continued development and that it contradicted STU's selection criteria. At the meeting, Maja refused to answer the question of whether she wanted to continue with taekwondo and sat silently, while her father, Niklas Bergström, argued for her continued participation. Moreover, Niklas stated during the meeting that Maja only found pleasure in the traveling aspect of Taekwondo and not so much in the training and competing in the sport itself. It is worth noting that STU's criteria for national team selection clearly state that the national team management reserves the right to terminate a player's assignment on the national team if attendance requirements are not met or if the player otherwise does not follow the directives given by the national team management. This had also been clearly conveyed to Maja and her parents by the national team coach, Finn Buchardt, and Maja's home coach at Mudo Team Academy IF. As a suggestion to try to resolve the situation that had arisen, I proposed at the meeting that we as parents should attend the training sessions to observe the team dynamics, which Maja's father finally agreed to after initial reluctance.

Despite what we discussed and agreed upon at the meeting, Maja continues to show a lack of engagement and miss training sessions, so I decided it was time to pull Ekatarina out of the team. After consulting with my daughter, the Poomsae girl cadet team was thus disbanded.

Despite the situation that had arisen, I was persuaded to let Ekatarina compete with the team one last time in a larger G1 competition in Croatia. Afterward, it was decided that the team would be disbanded for future Swedish competitions and that Ekatarina would not participate in the Poomsae European Championship with the current team composition. Upon arrival in Zagreb, Croatia on October 7, 2023, Maja was once again persuaded by her mother, Åsa Bergström, to compete, even though she cried and really did not want to. There were many witnesses who saw the interaction between Maja and her mother and were upset on Maja's behalf. She obviously did not feel well. Ekatarina, on the other hand, manages to place as the second-best Swedish participant in the individual category. In the team category, the girls manage to take a gold medal being that they were the only registered girl cadet team.

At the Swedish Cup in Kinna on October 15, 2023, after a proposal from Mudo Team Academy IF's coach, a new team was formed with Ekatarina, Lilly, and Nicole Abiad. The new team proved to be successful, won gold in the team category, and Ekatarina took silver individually and in pairs. This performance led to the national team coach deciding that this new team would represent Sweden in the upcoming Poomsae European Championship.

During the Swedish Championships in Linköping on November 5, 2023, the new team triumphed again with a gold, and Ekatarina also won gold individually and silver in pairs. Ekatarina is thus the current Swedish Champion in Poomsae girl cadet category.

Now, further complications arise when the outgoing board of Mudo Team Academy IF, which included Maja's parents and another person, refuses to hand over administrative passwords and disturbs the work for the new board by spreading defamation. On September 30, the

former board of Mudo Team Academy IF resigned. At that time, the newly elected board and the departing board had an agreement to share administrative passwords during a transition period to ensure a smooth handover. However, very unfortunate events occurred after the Swedish Cup competition in Kinna on October 15, 2023, where the new cadet team of Mudo Team Academy IF was tested. On Thursday, October 19, the departing board changed all administrative passwords, to the website, the accounting records, the association's Gmail account, the association's social media, etc., thereby obstructing the work of the new board, and various false accusations and defamation began to spread on social media and Mudo Team Academy IF's website. When the new chairman of Mudo Team Academy IF spoke with the chairman of the STU about this, he received the reply that these things happen in our sport. That she herself had been subjected to the same thing when she was elected to the STU board. In other words, she completely overlooked the incident and neglected to actually act on these violations and signal to the departing board that this is not how one should behave. The STU completely fails to act on something that is within its domain to address. Simply put, in my opinion, they are not doing the job they are supposed to do. This tendency was also shown in the case when the old board did not maintain the criteria for national team selection and the retention of a place for an athlete.

When the national team management correctly points out that Maja must attend trainings and competitions to retain her place, the old board of Mudo Team Academy IF, which included Maja's parents, did not act on this urging. Instead, Maja's parents say on several occasions that Maja no longer finds taekwondo fun and that she wants to quit. That she enjoys traveling with the sport but not the competition and training. Here, STU should have intervened and acted on a board that incorrectly leads its association where the criteria do not apply to everyone, especially not to their child. Even on this point, the STU does not act according to its and the RF's statutes, and no disciplinary actions are taken.

Maja's parents also reported, in my opinion, unfoundedly, the head coach of Mudo Team Academy IF for bullying and psychological abuse of their daughter to STU and the disciplinary committee of the Swedish Taekwondo Federation, all because a new girl cadet team was formed for the Swedish cup in Kinna, where three girls were picked, Lilly, Nicole and Ekatarina, that actually love their sport and gladly put in the work and attendance needed for competing in Poomsae.

As a result of the allegations made by Maja's parents, STU decides to fire the national team coach Finn Buchardt, and STU's board took over all decision making regarding the national team. Note that this decision is based on allegations and nothing has been done to probe if the allegations are true and no verdict has been passed from the disciplinary board at the Swedish Taekwondo Federation. STU then makes, in my opinion, the unfounded decision on November 13, 2023, to include Maja Bergström, Lilly Toth, and Amanda Larsson in the Poomsae European Championship girl cadet team, without informing Ekatarina or Nicole or us parents. This document is written on November 19, STU still has not informed Ekatarina Rafailovic, me as her father, the board of Mudo Team Academy IF, or her home coach, that Ekatarina has been taken off the registration list for the European Poomsae Championship in Innsbruck starting on November 23, 2023. No information, no explanation has been given!

Furthermore, Amanda Larsson is completely untested in the pair and team category and is ranked lower than Maja, Lilly, Nicole, and Ekatarina individually. Ekatarina is the highest-ranked in the individual category of all involved, and the current Swedish champion in Poomsae girl cadet individual category, but is still removed from the team. In other words, STU has not followed its own criteria for national team selection, nor has it followed its own requirements for how athletes retain their place on the national team, and it has done all this without informing the concerned parties. Should this be allowed to happen in a democratic country like Sweden? Should "adults" be able to do what they want, where they completely bypass democratic processes, and where children and youth suffer as a consequence of their political games and various personal conflicts?

Attachment 2 to the Formal Complaint – Description of alleged Manipulative Actions of a former board member of our club Mudo Team Academy IF and her collusion with the chairman of the Swedish Taekwondo Union (STU)

I wish to append to the formal complaint above the following detailed description, how I and others have observed, events highlighting the manipulative behavior of a person, a former board member of our club Mudo Team Academy IF, and her alleged collusion with the chairman of the Swedish Taekwondo Union (STU).

Sequence of Events:

Our association, Mudo Team Academy IF (Mudo being Sweden's first taekwondo club and a significant part of the sport's history in our country), has been affected by a series of devastating events that strain our community and our reputation.

A central figure in this situation is a former board member of our club. Her actions have escalated from dissatisfaction to active sabotage since she lost the benefits she enjoyed as a board member. After becoming a regular paying member, this person has initiated a personal vendetta against the association, marked by bitterness and a quest for revenge.

She has used false accusations as a weapon to undermine the integrity of the association. In my opinion, she has wrongly accused Mudo Team Academy IF of bullying and psychological abuse, and with the help of STU's chairman, whose motives I consider equally dubious, changed the narrative around a young athlete named Maja Bergström. Originally, Maja's parents communicated openly and honestly that Maja wished to leave taekwondo as her interest in the sport had waned. This honest intention was quickly distorted, under the aforementioned former board members influence, and replaced by a baseless story of bullying.

She has not only spread these false stories in our community but has also gone so far as to try to manipulate other parents whose children have left another team constellation to change their stories. These parents have stood by the truth and have refused to participate in her harmful campaign.

She has also actively obstructed the new board's work by refusing to hand over administrative access to important accounts and resources. Furthermore, she has spread defamation and untruths on social media, creating unnecessary pain and conflict within the association and with its members.

In light of these serious events, we request a thorough investigation to ensure that the truth comes out and that those responsible are held accountable. We believe that this manipulation and injustice have not only damaged the reputation of Mudo Team Academy IF but also the spirit and values of Swedish taekwondo that we have so proudly built and safeguarded since the sport was introduced in Sweden.

As for the chairman of the Swedish Taekwondo Union (STU), she has communicated that the alleged accusations directed to Mudo Team Academy IF, of bullying and psychological abuse, have been forwarded to the Disciplinary Committee within the Swedish Taekwondo Federation (Svenska Taekwondo Förbundet, STF). Thus, no judgment has been passed if the allegations are true. And all parties have not been heard. The chairman of the Swedish Taekwondo Union (STU) has made questionable decisions based on accusations, firing the Swedish National Team coach and changing the setup of the Swedish National team girl cadet team, going against the STUs own selection criteria, and not informing the relevant parties that she has constructed a new team.

Furthermore, the aforementioned former board member of Mudo Team Academy IF has at one point spoken with the current chairman of Mudo Team Academy IF. She has told him that Djordje is a wealthy parent and that this should have affected Ekatarina's taekwondo career. When she heard from the current chairman of Mudo Team Academy IF that he is also wealthy, he asked if this applies to him as well? To which she replied, 'But you are Swedish, Ekatarina's father is from such a culture.' I do not know what she means by this. Is it my race that she has something against? Is it the Jewish part of my name, Rafail? Is this an anti-Semitic statement? As a result of all this, two girls with foreign-sounding names, Rafailovic and Abiad, have been removed from the European Championship team. Instead, two Swedish-sounding names have replaced them. I believe that this must be investigated in detail. Any form of racism should not be allowed in Swedish sports.

I ask the Swedish Taekwondo Federation (Svenska Taekwondoförbundet, STF) Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet, RF) and the European Taekwondo Union (ETU) to carefully consider this information and act to ensure that justice and order are restored within our sports movement.