

Questions & Answers

Individual Neutral Athletes (AINs)

Why has the ISU made this decision now?

- The ISU has evaluated the [recommendations of the IOC](#) and detailed information gathered from the IOC regarding the participation of Individual Neutral Athletes (“AIN”) in the Olympic Games Paris 2024. The ISU recognizes that in case the IOC will allow AINs to participate at the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 (“OWG 2026”), a pathway should be in place for AINs to qualify.
- The ISU recognizes that competing in the Olympic Winter Games is the pinnacle of any skater’s career.
- The Olympic Qualifying Events for Milano Cortina 2026 will soon get under way, consequently a decision had to be taken as soon as possible to ensure that all requirements are fulfilled and in place.

How many AINs will be allowed to participate?

- The Russian and Belarusian national federations/Belarusian National Olympic Committee will each be able to nominate:
 - Maximum one Athlete and one substitute (in case of injury prior to qualification) per individual event (One pair for Pair Skating, One couple for Ice Dance) in Figure Skating
 - Maximum one Athlete and one substitute (in case of injury prior to qualification) per individual event in Speed Skating / Short Track Speed Skating

Will AINs be able to participate in ISU events other than Olympic Qualification events?

- No. In order to seek qualification for the OWG 2026, AIN will only be able to participate in the designated Figure Skating Qualification Competition, or the Qualification Competitions outlined in the Olympic Qualification System documents in Speed Skating and Short Track Speed Skating.

Which events are designated Olympic Qualification competitions for AINs?

- The participation of AINs is limited to the following provisionally allotted competitions:
- **Figure Skating:**
 - ISU Figure Skating Olympic Qualifying Competition – September 17-21, 2025 – Beijing, China
- **Short Track:**
 - ISU Short Track World Tour – October 16-19, 2025 – Montreal, Canada
 - ISU Short Track World Tour – October 23-26, 2025 – Salt Lake City, USA
 - ISU Short Track World Tour – November 20-23, 2025 – Gdansk, Poland
 - ISU Short Track World Tour – November 27-30, 2025 – Dordrecht, Netherlands

- **Speed Skating:**
 - ISU World Cup Speed Skating – November 14-16, 2025 – Salt Lake City, USA
 - ISU World Cup Speed Skating – November 21-23, 2025 – Calgary, Canada
 - ISU World Cup Speed Skating – December 5-7, 2025 – Heerenveen, Netherlands
 - ISU World Cup Speed Skating – December 12-14, 2025 – Hamar, Norway

Why does the ISU only allow AINs for the Olympic Qualification events and not any other events?

- With the new IOC Recommendations, new conditions are given for an adaption of [ISU Communication 2469](#), which otherwise prohibits the participation of skaters affiliated with ISU Members in Russia (Russian Skating Union and the Figure Skating Federation of Russia) and Belarus (Skating Union of Belarus) at ISU Events and International Competitions. These new conditions extend only to the Olympic Qualification events.

What is the possible maximum number of AINs that could skate in Milano Cortina 2026, and how does that compare to Beijing 2022?

The maximum possible Quota Places at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games for AINs are as follows:

- **Figure Skating:** 6 athletes per respective passport holder country
 - 1 x Man Single Skating, 1 x Woman Single Skating, 1 x Pair Skating (2 athletes), 1 x Ice Dance (2 athletes).
 - There will be no “team” comprised of Neutral Athletes participating in the Team event in Figure Skating.
- **Speed Skating and Short Track Speed Skating:** One athlete per respective passport holder country and per individual event. Team events (Relays in Short Track, Team Pursuit in Speed Skating) will be excluded.
 - **Speed Skating**
 - 1 x Man each in the following events: 500m, 1000m, 1500m, 5000m, 10000m, Mass Start per respective passport holder country.
 - 1 x Woman each in the following events: 500m, 1000m, 1500m, 3000m, 5000m, Mass Start per respective passport holder country.
 - The total number of AINs will depend on the qualified event quota places, based on the general conditions of the Olympic Qualification Document. AINs may compete to qualify for a quota place for several individual events.
 - **Short Track Speed Skating**
 - 1 x Man in each of the distances 500m, 1000m, 1500m.
 - 1 x Woman in each of the distances 500m, 1000m, 1500m.
 - In case of secured quota in several of the above distances, the one Man and/or one Woman will do all distances. This will be the athlete having achieved the best distance qualifying rank according to the Olympic Qualification Documents. In case of a tie, the athlete will be selected by the ISU according to the best distance ranking achieved in any of the Olympic Qualifying Competitions.
- In Beijing 2022, the Russian Olympic Committee (“**ROC**”) and Belarus secured the following Quota Places:

- Figure Skating: ROC - 3x Men Single, 3x Women Single, 3 Pairs Skating (2x Skaters), 3x Ice Dance (Skaters). Belarus – 1 x Man Single, 1 x Woman Single
- Speed Skating: ROC - 8 x Men and 8 x Women. Belarus - 1 x Man and 4 x Women
- Short Track: ROC - 5 x Men and 5 x Women. Belarus no quotas

How does it work for substitutes?

- One Substitute per AIN is allowed in case of illness or injury prior to the start of the Olympic Qualification System (“**OQS**”) competitions. The Substitute may only participate in OQS events and cannot replace a Nominated Athlete injured after the conclusion of the OQS events.
- The Substitutes are subject to the same Focused Olympic Anti-Doping Program and special screening as are the Nominated Athletes. Only those that are declared eligible after having passed the Anti-Doping program and special screening may act as Substitutes.
- The AINs or, in case of injury, their Substitutes, are allowed to participate in the Figure Skating Olympic Qualifying Competition during the Season 2025/26 to compete for Quota Places and possible qualification for the OWG 2026. In case of injury of a Nominated Athlete before the set deadline, and in accordance with the general rules for substitution, their Substitute, if qualified, will fill the respective quota place for the OWG 2026.
- In Speed Skating and in Short Track Speed Skating, the Substitutes may step in according to the general rules for substitution, that means only, if a case of illness or injury happens before the set deadline for an OQS event. There is no substitution in an OQS event, if an injury happens during the event. The results achieved by the Substitute for AIN count for the respective Special Olympic Qualification Classification (“**SOQC**”). In case, the AIN is able to return to competition at the next or a later OQS event, the AIN and not the Substitute continues the qualification.
- In case, the AIN cannot return to competition throughout the qualification process, the Substitute, if qualified, fills the respective quota place in Speed Skating. In the same case, the Substitute is considered for selecting the one AIN per gender and passport holder country doing all distances in Short Track Speed Skating.
- There is no substitution for AIN who did not fulfill the Eligibility Criteria or for AIN who, after fulfillment, were excluded from participation if they violate any of the Eligibility Criteria or other ISU Statutes or Rules.

What is the timing for the inclusion of AIN?

- By latest **February 28 2025**, the Figure Skating Federation of Russia, Russian Skating Union and Belarusian Skating Union/Belarusian National Olympic Committee will be able to nominate to the ISU one Athlete and one substitute (in case of injury prior to qualification) per individual event in Figure Skating/Speed Skating/Short Track Speed Skating, one pair for Pair Skating and one couple for Ice Dance who can participate as AINs.
- A special screening, conducted with the support of specialist external contractors, will ensure that the Nominated Athletes and Substitutes who will be accepted as AINs have neither publicly supported nor are publicly supporting the invasion of Ukraine and are not linked to Russian/Belarusian military or security agencies.
- Nominated Athletes and Substitutes will be subject to the Focused Olympic Anti-Doping Program with targeted testing, thorough investigations and close monitoring of their athlete biological passport and their whereabouts prior to the competition that will take months to implement.
- Only when athletes have passed these tests successfully will they be able to compete.

How will you make sure that the Nominated Athletes are neutral if they are nominated by the National Federations?

- A special screening, conducted with the support of specialist external contractors, will ensure that no athlete has publicly supporting the invasion of Ukraine or are linked to Russian/Belarusian military or security agencies.
- Anyone having any information regarding any specific athlete that they wish to report in the context of this screening will have the possibility to anonymously report it.
- Athletes will be ineligible on the basis of any pro-invasion actions, such as public statements, social media posts, participation in demonstrations, or displaying symbols like the "Z".

Will AIN be allowed to participate in interviews or press conferences during an event?

- AIN will not be allowed to give any interviews to the media.
- They will not be allowed to go through the mixed zone or to participate in any press conference during qualification events.

What will happen if there is any break of rules from AIN or their support personnel?

- If the ISU becomes aware of a breach of the Eligibility Criteria or other conditions of AIN participation, the ISU Council may withdraw the status of AIN and/or their Support Personnel.
- Such a decision can be appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) under Article 26 of the ISU Constitution.

If there is a break of an eligibility rule by an AIN, can they be substituted?

- No, there will be no substitution for AINs who fail to meet the eligibility criteria or are excluded for breach of Eligibility Criteria or other conditions of AIN participation.

How can you ensure that there will not be any doping issues?

- Athletes nominated to become AIN will be subject to a more stringent Anti-Doping Program which includes in and out of competition testing.
- The Focused Olympic Anti-Doping Program of the ISU will include Nominated Athletes in the ISU Registered Testing Pool and make them subject to the respective obligations by latest February 28, 2025. The Focused Olympic Anti-Doping Program of the ISU will be implemented in consultation with the IOC and in accordance with WADA requirements.
- The Focused Olympic Anti-Doping Program, will include, where applicable, targeted testing, thorough investigations and close monitoring of athletes' biological passport and their whereabouts prior to the competition and throughout the competitions.
- Sample-taking will be executed by Doping Control Officials from outside of Russia/Belarus and the samples will be analyzed by WADA-accredited laboratories outside of Russia/Belarus in accordance with the testing process and procedures defined by WADA.
- The Focused Olympic Anti-Doping Program is in line with international and WADA requirements.

Can Officials from Russia and Belarus start officiating again at ISU events?

- No, the adaptation of the [ISU Communication 2469](#) is only valid for skaters and their Support Personnel, but not for Judges, Referees and other Officials.

Have you consulted the Ukrainian federations before taking that decision?

- The ISU maintains its condemnation of the invasion of Ukraine and continues to provide financial support to Ukrainian Skaters through various initiatives, including the ISU Development Program, contributions to the Ukrainian Skating Federation, and a support program for displaced skaters. At the same time, the ISU remains independent in its decision-making from all its Members.

Who will pay for the expenses incurred from the participation of AIN and their Support Personnel?

- Expenses such as equipment, travel, accommodation and other similar expenses will be borne by the AIN.

Will the ISU Council review the adaptation of ISU Communication 2469 in the future?

- The ISU Council will continue to monitor the situation and reserves the right to make any changes.

For further details, please refer to [ISU Communication 2680](#).