



International
Olympic
Committee

The President

100th Anniversary of the IOC Executive Board

Olympia, 17 October 2021

Our gathering here today is a very special one. To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the IOC Executive Board, we have returned to our spiritual home here in ancient Olympia.

What better reason than this anniversary to express our thanks and gratitude to the President of the Hellenic Republic, Her Excellency Katerina Sakellariopoulou. Our heartfelt thanks also go to Georgios Georgiopoulos, the Mayor of Olympia, the cradle of this precious gift of the Greek people to humankind, the Olympic Games. I would also like to acknowledge our guardian institutions of the Olympic spirit, the Hellenic Olympic Committee and its President Spyros Capralos, as well as the International Olympic Academy and its President Isidoros Kouvelos, for all their invaluable work to preserve our Greek heritage.

The presence of all our Greek friends here today underlines the unique and important role that Greece plays in the Olympic Movement. We will always be grateful to Greece and to the Greek people for their great contribution to humankind.

I am sure our admired and beloved founder Pierre de Coubertin is with us in spirit today. I hope that seeing us from above will warm his heart, which is so close to us here. And maybe he is even a little bit proud and grateful to see us, his successors, honouring him and his great Olympic legacy.

One of his many legacies to us is the establishment of the IOC Executive Board. The very first IOC EB meeting took place in Paris, on the 7th of November 1921. The reasons why this board was created are not entirely clear. Some say that its creation was the result of tensions between leading IOC Members at the time.

Some say the EB was set up to keep an IOC President with a zest for action in check – a thought that I am sure has never crossed your minds.

Coubertin later wrote that he created the EB with the purpose to ensure a smooth transition to his successor.

According to the minutes of the very first EB meeting, the *raison d'être* of the executive commission, as it was known initially, was to ensure the smooth operation of the IOC during periods when the IOC President would be absent.

There is very little risk of this happening today. In our digital age, it is actually very difficult for an IOC President to be absent even for a moment.

At the time, the newly created board was responsible for managing the finances and ensuring that the IOC rules with regards to the Olympic Games are observed and implemented.

It appears, therefore, that the alleged initial tensions surrounding its creation were quickly resolved. In fact, the core functions of the EB have endured until today and served our organisation well over the past century.

The topics discussed at the very first EB meeting were not too different from what we would see on one of our agendas today.

There were important administrative matters such as electing new IOC Members. There was a decision taken to honour Olympic champions, illustrating that already back then, athletes were at the heart of the EB discussions. Similar to us today, the EB was updated on the state of preparations for an upcoming edition of the Olympic Games in Paris 1924. In another parallel to the present, Paris and Los Angeles are mentioned in the same breath with regards to the organisation of Olympic Games, showing that the connection we see today between these great Olympic hosts even goes back a century.

Another key function of the EB was to prepare important decisions for the IOC Session. Over the last 100 years, there have been many landmark EB decisions that have shaped our Olympic Movement. From laying the groundwork for electing Olympic hosts; to the composition of the Olympic programme; to establishing the traditions of Olympic ceremonies; to promoting gender equality; to creating the TOP programme; to setting the course for the future with Olympic Agenda 2020 and Olympic Agenda 2020+5. The EB has prepared the ground for all these fundamental decisions, and many more, shaping the direction of our Movement.

The trustful relationship between the President and the EB members is another constant element. Already Coubertin highlighted the trust that he placed in the members of the first EB which in his view combined skills and dedication, saying that this combination will be important for the work of the board going ahead.

As ever, our founder was a visionary, and it is great to see that this great combination of skill, expertise and dedication remains a constant feature in the EB up until today.

That we can see a bright future for our beloved Olympic Movement today is because we stand on the shoulders of our illustrious predecessors, to whom we owe so much.

As we look back at 100 years of the EB, let us do so in the knowledge that we are only temporary trustees of this great heritage. As our predecessors have done before us, let us ensure that we continue to carry this responsibility with dignity so that we can pass on this wonderful Olympic legacy to the next generations of Olympic leaders.