

Status Report to the 2018 ISU Congress on the Four Year Plan 2014/15-2017/18

Committee/Commission:

ISU Council/ISU Secretariat

Project/Function/Area of Activity:

Media/Communications

The last two years have been busy for the Media and Communications department of the ISU. In 2016, the newly elected ISU President and ISU Council members had three clear pillars that they wished to focus on; media, marketing and promotion being one of them. The Media Team stepped up to the challenge and put all its energy in improving and adapting its strategy to the fast-changing pace and ever-increasing demands of today's sports fans.

With the support of the ISU Council, the department has been able to recruit an additional person in the Marketing Team and in the Media and Communications Team. The budget for both teams' activities was increased in order to have the necessary resources to be able to achieve some of the challenging goals that were set by the teams.

These last two years, the Media Team implemented a more fan centric and content-based strategy in order to increase the visibility of all ISU Sports. A new website was launched in September 2017 in time for the Olympic season, which separates fan orientated content which is available on the home page, to the institutional content which is available in the new "Inside ISU" section of the website. In order to keep the website interesting and up to date with the latest information, the editorial plan had to be adapted and a large amount of content produced. Therefore, the Media Team created more videos, photographs, articles and news through out the Olympic season with the aim to create a destination for fans not only on the ISU website, but also on the ISU social media platforms.

This Status Report lists in no particular order a summary of the numerous projects undertaken by the Media Team.

Servicing the Media

The shift to digital has a big impact to the workflow and requirements of the media. The ISU aims to provide a high level of service to the media. Television Right Holders, journalists and photographers have all suffered budget cuts, which directly impacts the number of persons attending an ISU Event. Although the ISU has not suffered a large decline in attendance, the number of attendees is lower. The good news however is the fact that a number of media are covering ISU events remotely and therefore the ISU must adapt to this ongoing trend.

In the past, the ISU's emphasis was on providing a high level of service to media attending an Event, however the ISU has been looking out tools and procedures to provide the same level of service to media covering an ISU event remotely. Television right holders, and in particular offsite commentators covering Figure Skating Events, receive a good level of service through the Commentator Information System, accessible remotely. The media can now also access all the relevant information on the ISU website and which makes the information available to a larger number of persons during and after Events.

Media are also present on social media platforms and in particular on Twitter, therefore the ISU uses the platform to communicate with the media and other stakeholders. Of course, the ISU will continue to look for ways to service the press by using all the technology available today.

Event coverage

Since 2016 all ISU Events have been covered in some form. However, in order to take advantage of the Olympic season, the ISU decided to increase the amount of coverage by sending teams of freelance journalists and social media reporters to some key events:

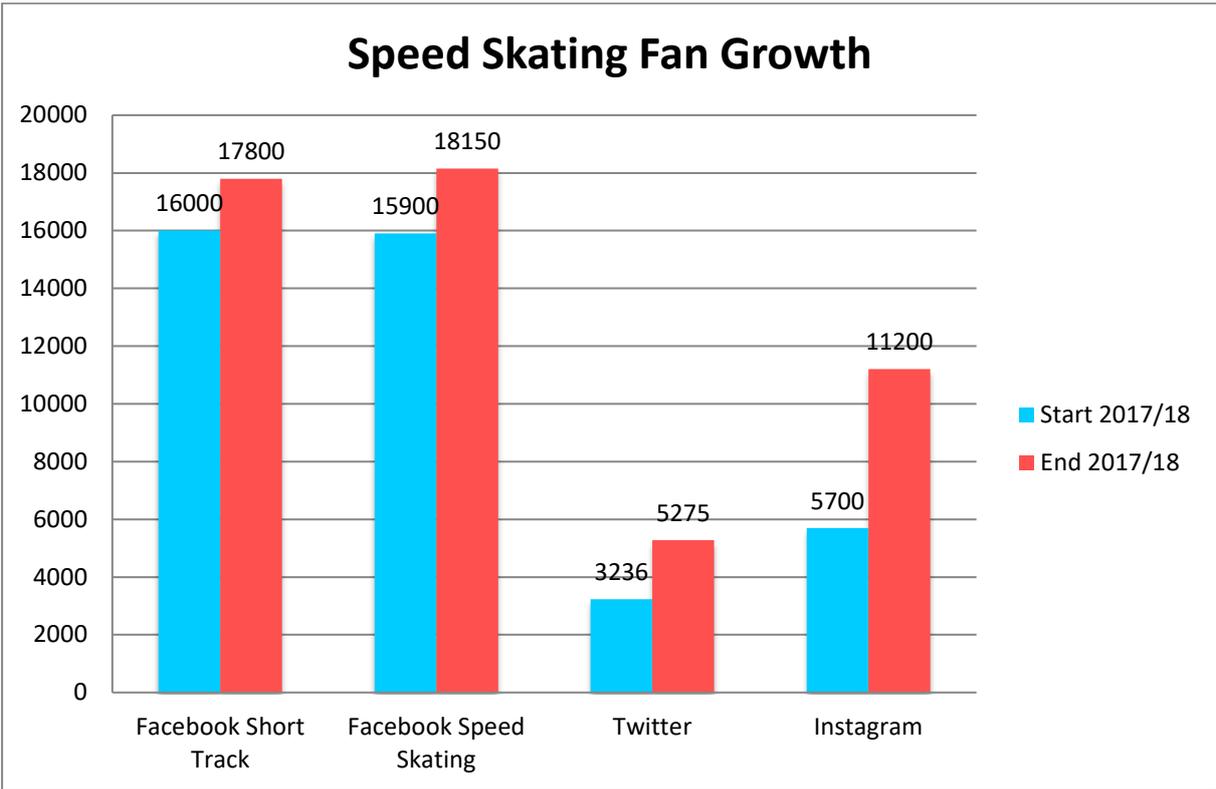
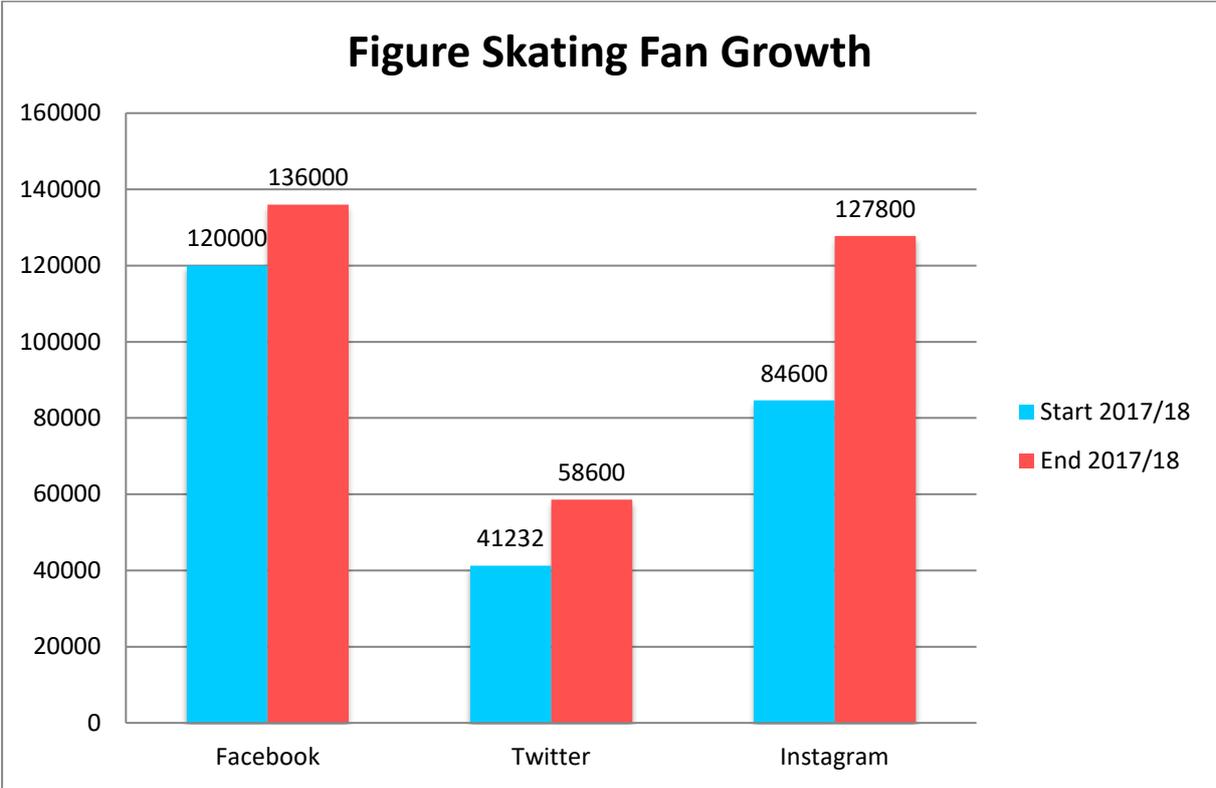
1. **Photographic coverage of every ISU Event:** the ISU signed a two-year contract with Getty Images to cover all ISU Events, including the Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating, Junior World Cup Speed Skating, Grand Prix of Figure Skating, World Cup Speed Skating and Short Track Speed Skating and every ISU Championship. Consequently over 120 days of Events have been covered producing over 23,000 photographs per season, which are now part of the ISU Photographic collection.
2. **Editorial coverage:** during the Olympic season the ISU worked with a number of reporters for news and / or social media purposes. They covered Figure Skating, Synchronized Skating, Speed Skating and Short Track Speed Skating by sending press releases to the media, publishing news on the ISU website and on the ISU social media platforms. Due to the new Audi sponsorship, a reporter was sent to all Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating Events, and the World Cup Speed Skating Olympic Qualifying Events. This generated a lot more additional content and buzz before the Olympics.
3. **Video of almost all ISU Events:** ISU Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series was live streamed on YouTube. The following events were live streamed on the ISU Skating Channel and available on Demand: all Figure Skating Championships. All World Cup Speed Skating Events and all Speed Skating. All World Cup Short Track Speed Skating Events, the European and World Championships.
4. **Social Media coverage of all ISU Senior Events:** A social media team was sent to the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final 2017 and the ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2018 and covered the events on social media, increasing the visibility of Figure Skating prior to the Olympics. A social media team was also present during the flagship events: ISU World Allround Speed Skating Championships, ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships, ISU World Figure Skating Championships and the ISU World Synchronized Skating Championships.

Social Media

The presence of ISU sports on social media has grown considerably year on year through the efforts and strategy of the ISU Media Team; tackling new challenges, creating content and targeting audiences on each social media platform. With the aim to take full advantage of the Olympic season, the Media Team set three specific goals which were reached:

- increase the follower base across all social media platforms by 30%.
- Increase the engagement of fans through interaction across all social media platforms by 30%
- Drive 5% to 10% of traffic to website from social media platforms

The different distribution outlets enabled the Media Team to make various content available throughout the year. During the season it was mainly focused on Event coverage and off season other stories, news, photos and videos were made available in order to keep the fans interested.



The ISU Media Team not only set the bar high but has also created a new high standard for the coverage of all ISU Events through social media, introducing the use of graphics, artwork, images and gifs that link to results, stories, news, interviews, biographies, statistics and more.

The Media Team efforts on social media concentrate specifically on promoting and covering ISU Events specifically but continue to explore new ideas, stories and ways to create new content.

The ISU Media Team aims to work more closely with ISU Members in order to improve the communication and to provide them with content that is relevant to them.

Creating a presence in China

Since the announcement that Beijing would host the 2022 Winter Olympic Games, the ISU Media Team started to define a strategy to create a presence on social media platforms in China. Growth on these channels started slowly but PyeongChang 2018 played a pivotal role.

The ISU Media Team is revisiting different strategies to create more engaging content specifically targeted to this market.



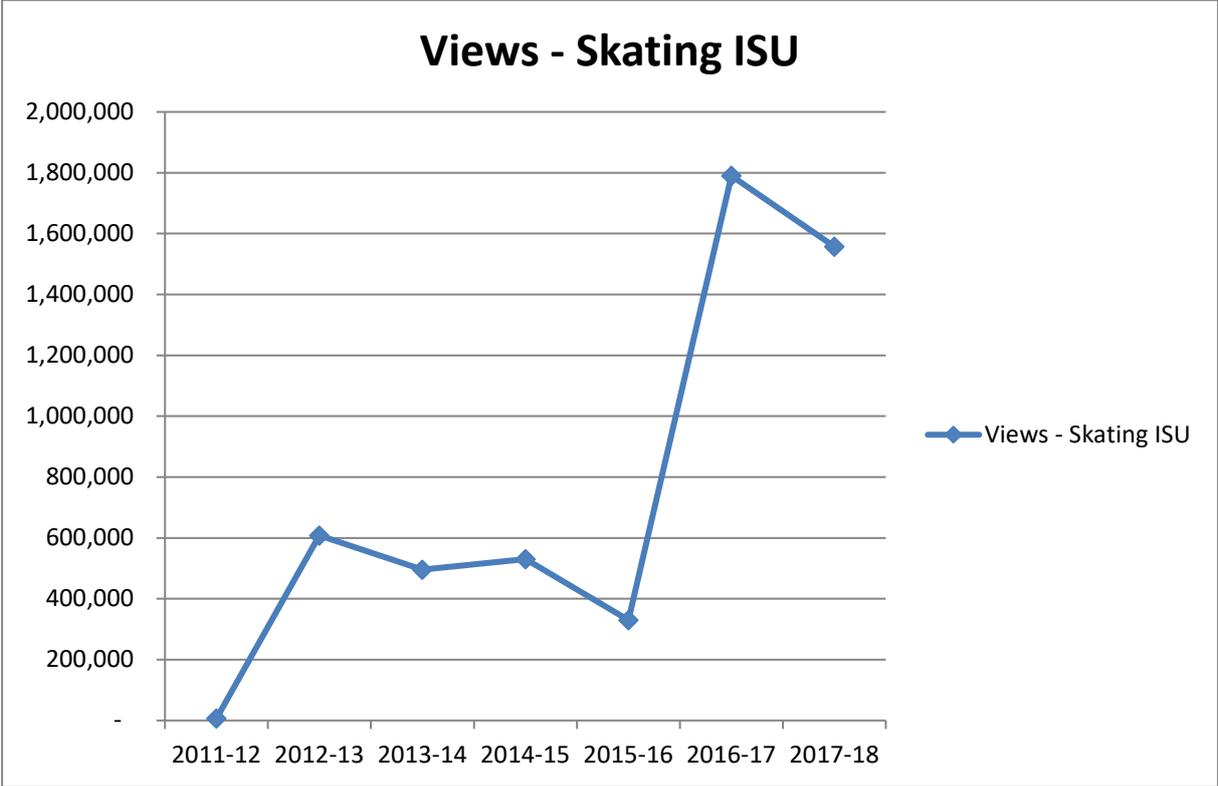
Videos

Video has been identified as the most powerful and popular media on social platforms. “If a picture is worth a 1000 words, a video is worth a million”, best describes the importance of video.

However, Television rights provide an essential income for the ISU which brings challenges as the rights have been sold in key Skating markets and consequently any live stream must be geo-blocked in those markets. On the other hand, the broadcast landscape is changing at its own pace and has provided some opportunities. Whenever possible the ISU tries to carve out some of the digital rights from the broadcast contracts and has been proactive in contacting broadcast partners for waivers in order to use a limited amount of footage that would not devalue the rights. This has allowed the ISU to produce highlight and promotional videos that are used either prior to or after an Event. The videos have also been shown across media and have been included as part of the in-house entertainment.

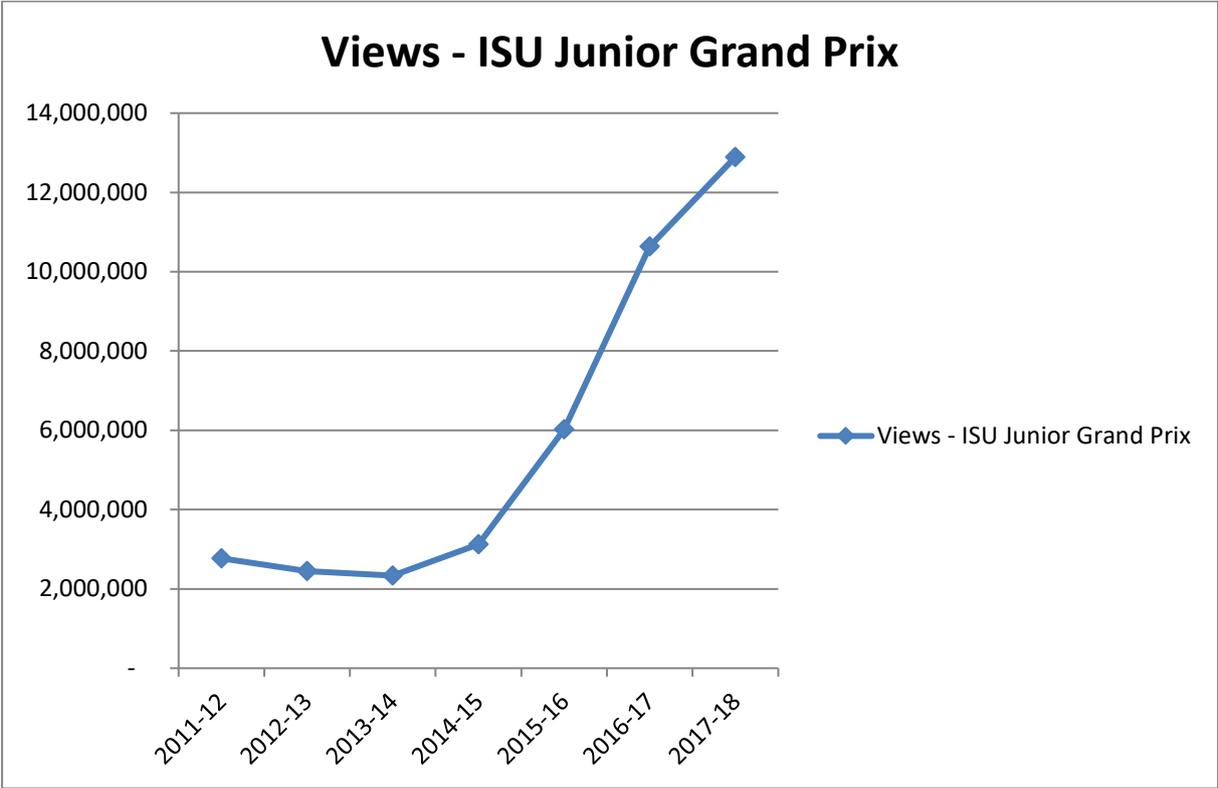
Additionally, the ISU put in a place a plan to provide coverage from the major ISU Championships on social media by working with retired skaters who acted as hosts (Charlie White, Cathy Reed and Kim Lucine) and partnered with a production company to produce videos within the limits of the TV contracts but quickly and efficiently. This strategy has proven to be very successful as the views in our YouTube channel have soared to almost 2 million in a single season as per the chart below.

For the first time, the ISU World Synchronized Skating Championships 2018 were covered through social media and an extensive video project. The videos produced over half a million views on all platforms allowing the ISU to boost the visibility of the sport.



Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating on YouTube

YouTube has hosted the ISU Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating live stream since 2011. In the last two seasons views has surpassed 10 million views. This shows the great demand for live streaming of Figure Skating Events. The ISU Junior Grand Prix project has proven to be one of the most successful initiatives since it gives young athletes exposure and fans exclusive access to the series. The production team also does highlights, interviews and preview videos. All 7 Events are shown live with more than a million views per season.



Live streams through the ISU Skating Channel

The ISU Skating Channel is the online live streaming solution for senior Events across all disciplines. The ISU has been successful in negotiating waivers with television right holders to open more markets for this live video feed. Through these negotiations, the World Cup for both Speed Skating and Short Track Speed Skating were shown across Europe.

Below, the table shows that the consumption of live streams is on the rise, despite the necessity to geoblock major skating countries.

<i>Season</i>	<i>Total live video streams delivered</i>	<i>Total on demand video streams delivered</i>	<i>Total Streams</i>
2011/12	<i>186'000</i>	<i>275'000</i>	461'000
2012/13	<i>225'000</i>	<i>220'000</i>	445'000
2013/14	<i>428'094</i>	<i>338'172</i>	766'266
2014/15	<i>570'182</i>	<i>447'715</i>	1'017'897
2015/16	<i>668'243</i>	<i>512'946</i>	1'181'189
2016/17	<i>618'054</i>	<i>326'677</i>	944'731
2017/18	<i>584'755</i>	<i>1'018'295</i>	1'603'050

ISU Website

The new ISU website was launched in September 2017 in time for the ISU season 2017/18 and PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games.

The new technology used for the website is faster, more permissive and allows the ISU to plan evolutions without having to fully update the website. Livestreams and Social Network feeds are now seamlessly integrated into the website. Paired with the new editorial strategy, the Media Team can focus more on the promotion of ISU sports and use the website as a powerful internal communications tool. A new Development section has also been added to the website to promote and give more visibility to the activities of the Development Program. Additionally seminars are now integrated into the calendar.

Security has also been improved with the implementation of a security certificate (SSL/https) and a content delivery network (CDN). A CDN is a geographically distributed network of web servers. It helps to distribute our website with a faster time response, provide high availability and reduce possibilities of hacking.

Some planned features are still in development, such as the integration of picture galleries, improvements of the Event pages in order to include livestreams and other relevant content, as well as the optimization for mobile and tablet navigation. Live results integration was tested during PyeongChang 2018 via an Olympic Data Feed (ODF) system.

The ISU website hosts a lot of content, and separating the fan content from the “Inside ISU” content, has enabled the ISU to have a clearer editorial and content strategy. The ISU received a lot of positive comments regarding the new website and was also reactive when there were any issues that needed attending to.

The statistics below show the number of visits and users. The season 2017/18 shows that there is a decrease in the number of visits to the website compared to last season. Within the same time frame (ending April 12, 2018), figures show that there is a drop of 200,000 visits, but at the same time, the number of users has increased by 5.2%.

	Number of users	Number of sessions (visits)	Page / Session	Total number of pages views	Avg. session duration
2010/11	1,203,684	3,797,224	3.06	9,622,403	00:02:03
2011/12	1,164,311	3,705,246	3.15	9,150,267	00:02:14
2012/13	1,263,966	3,884,645	3.06	9,358,298	00:02:04
2013/14 (Olympic Season)	2,851,090	5,632,540*	2.71	15,344,906	00:02:24
2014/15	1,379,404	3,982,977	3.20	12,741,154	00:02:44
2015/16	1,541,778	4,629,955	3.01	14,434,166	00:02:43
2016/17	1,758,595	5,353,903	3.11	16,677,612	00:02:36
2017/18 (As of 12/04/18)	1,684,320	4,653,844	3.05	14,180,698	00:02:30

* Approximately 1,350,000 sessions due to Olympics related Attack

The drop of traffic during the season 2017/18 is twofold:

Technical: when the new website was launched, most of the website's URL changed, consequently previous links available on search engines were incorrect, and the delay for them to be updated would have taken several days. A second technical impact has been linked to the setup of the security certificate (https) on the website. This intervention has also created a drop in the number of sessions even with a number of users close to that of last season.

Strong online competition: with more resources and exclusive access to content, PyeongChang 2018, the IOC and the Olympic Channel have a very strong online presence through their websites and social media platforms. The athletes were also very active on social media which may have resulted in the dispersion of users who had access to information through multiple sources during the Olympic Winter Games. This of course is positive for ISU Sports, but did have an impact on the visibility of the ISU.

With the Olympic season now over, the second phase of the ISU website will kick off in order to offer further improvements, enhancements and new features:

- A new FAQ section will be created in order to help users navigate the website with helpful information.
- Testing of the integration of live results in the website will continue to take place during the upcoming season. This however is closely linked to the status of the ISU Central Database project (see below).
- Integration of Online Forms in order to ease processes and reduce the number of printed documents in order to be in line with the sustainability working group targets.
- Improve the Event pages in order to include relevant content such as photo galleries, live streams etc.

ISU Cloud

The ISU has taken an inclusive approach regarding content made available to the media. Therefore, instead of sending information to a limited group of persons via email, the ISU media team has decided to include Figure Skating event documents (Music Selection, Entries, Quick Quotes, etc. ...) directly into its related event page.

In order to achieve this, a private cloud system has been created allowing anyone to access the documents, reducing the amount of emails and paper.

ISU Corporate Identity

The ISU Council approved a new ISU Corporate Identity which will be officially launched during the ISU Congress 2018. It was identified that the ISU brand was weakened by the fact that there are no clear guidelines in place, leaving the use of the ISU brand open to interpretation. The Corporate Identity will have an impact on ISU Events, website, social media and all other ISU properties. The Corporate Identity will be rolled out during the season 2018/19, and a new identity for each ISU sport will be unveiled during the season 2018/19.

ISU Central database

In order for the ISU to develop a mobile application featuring live results, biographies, statistics and other information, it has been identified that to be efficient and to standardize the data, the ISU must bring together the data from all its Sports into one centralized database. This will result in the replacement of external pages (isuresults.com, isuresults.eu, shorttrack.sportresult.com & isu.infostradasports.com) by data directly integrated in the website. The development of the centralized ISU database is complex with a number of parties involved but has already commenced.

ISU Newsletter

Currently the ISU issues a weekly email featuring the latest updates on the ISU website, and the ISU World Newsletter published three times per season. The ISU Media Team is working on a project that will combine the two above mentioned projects. The goal is to create an informative and up-to-date digital Newsletter aimed at the Skating family and the Skating fans.

Every year the small ISU Media Team, composed of the Communications and Media Coordinator, two Assistant Communications and Media Coordinators and Assistant Communications and Digital Coordinator and up to four freelance writers, performs a growing number of tasks throughout the season. These are listed below:

- **ISU World:** published 3 times a year. A digital version dramatically increased readership of the newsletter. The last edition of the printed version of the ISU World was issued in January 2018. The next editions of the newsletters will be only in digital form.
- **Producing media advisories:** the Media Team is conscious that communicating to its stakeholders is an important task and key for any organization, the Team therefore tries to increase the amount of information and outreach and consequently the number of media advisories has increased year on year. 2014/15: 90 media advisories, 2015/16: 150, 2016/17: 170. In order to maximize the coverage during the Olympic season the number increased to 190 to date. The media advisories are drafted and sent to the media and ISU Members. These include information on media accreditation, competition previews, competition press releases, ISU Statements, promotion initiatives etc.
- **Internal Communication:** in 2016 the ISU Media Team started to send weekly emails with the latest information available on the ISU website. The email is sent to ISU Members and Office Holders and includes information such as updates on Events (change of dates, cancellations etc.), publication of Announcements and Communications and various other items of interest. Ways to make this process less labor-intensive and more appealing to the recipients are being explored.
- **ISU Website:** maintaining and updating the ISU website on a daily basis with ISU Communications, news, events, pictures, videos and other content.
- **Social media:** posting and moderating content on 13 different accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Weibo, Yuko etc.) on a daily basis.

- **Figure Skating onsite media support:** a reporter attends all ISU Grand Prix and Championships and provides essential support to the Event Coordinators and the media on site. The ISU Communications and Media Coordinator attends the ISU Grand Prix Final, European and World Championships to manage key areas such as the mixed zone and press center, assist ISU television Right Holders and provide other administrative and logistical support to the OC, while the Assistant Communications Coordinator attends the major Events in order to assure a good and comprehensive social media coverage of the Event. Since the World Championships 2017, a social media team has attended the major ISU Figure Skating events in order to increase the visibility and promotion of the ISU Events.
- **Short Track Speed Skating, Speed Skating and Synchronized Skating onsite media support:** whenever possible the ISU Media Team attends ISU Events and Championships in order to provide support to the local press officer and to promote the Events through official ISU channels (social media, website etc.). During the Olympic season a reporter was sent to all the Olympic qualifying events and to the World Championships. Additionally, a social media person was sent to the World Championships in order to increase the visibility and promotion of the Championships.
- **Event preparation:** the Media and Marketing Teams liaise with the OCs on media, social media, communications and marketing matters related to the Event. This includes the preparation of media accreditations, media information documents and forms, processing all media accreditation requests from all ISU Events, promoting the events through social media with the assistance of the OC or third parties (e.g. OC agency, Infront, IMG etc.), aligning communication strategies with the OC, reviewing marketing material etc.
- **Media Guides:** at the beginning of each season the Media Team prepares media guides that include a summary of each sport and updates results throughout the season. They can be found on the ISU website: <http://www.isu.org/media-guides>
- **Freelancers:** in order to increase the coverage at ISU Events, the Media Team has increased the pool of freelancers it works with. This has had an impact on the quality and quantity of the content. Additional content such as long form articles which include interviews with athletes, profiles, information about the ISU disciplines, equipment, training etc. were produced for the first time during the season 2016/17.
- **ISU photographers:** back in 2014, the ISU did not own any photographs from its Events and had to rely on the presence of other photographers in order to obtain pictures. However, in December 2014 the ISU signed a contract with Getty Images in order to start building an ISU Photo Collection. The ISU now covers every single ISU Event (Championships, Junior Grand Prix, Grand Prix, World Cups and Junior World Cups), which enables the Media Team to use the content on the ISU website and social media platforms. ISU Members and OCs can also use the pictures in their programs and in order to promote their athletes and events. Pictures can also be provided to sponsors and other partners.

- **Rink board and ISU promotion initiatives:** the Media Team liaises with OCs regarding the creation of ISU rink boards when appropriate and promotes ISU initiatives directly related to the concerned Event (Event Twitter hashtag, promotional material etc.).
- **Media accreditations:** the Media Team prepares, assesses and processes media accreditation requests from written press and television right holders applying to attend ISU Events and Championships (this includes all Grand Prix, World Cups and Championships: approximately 20 Events in total) and deals with over 2,000 media requests during a normal season. This number is significantly higher during an Olympic season.
- **Expand and update the ISU Communication strategy:** the Media Team liaises with a number of ISU bodies and stakeholders: negotiating renewal of contracts with current providers (e.g. Getty Images, freelancers, photographers and editing of short clips); negotiating contracts for new or additional projects with existing or new providers (e.g. website, email system, Gracenote, Swiss Timing etc.); liaising with ISU staff and Office Holders to implement and adapt strategies (e.g. social media, short clips, commentator seminars etc.).
- **Moderate the news:** the Media Team alerts the ISU Director General and the ISU President of any potential “hot” topics.
- **Provide assistance to ISU Council, Office Holders and ISU Members:**
- **General enquiries:** the Media Team responds to general enquiries from the media, Organizing Committees, rights holders, providers and the general public either through email, the website or social media.
- **Logistical and administrative tasks:** the Media Team liaises with photographers and other partners that attend ISU Events and arranges accreditation, transport and accommodation and also carries out general administrative tasks such as processing invoices, negotiating or renewing contracts, attending meetings (internal, IOC, partners, providers) etc.
- **Television Right Holders:** the Media teams deals with contract management and implementation from the Secretariat and at ISU Events. Negotiation of contracts (new and renewals). Inform other parties of rights and their potential restrictions (Skating Channel, video editing and distribution etc.)
- **Sponsorship:** the Media team prepares proposals and reports for current and potential sponsors. Daily communication with agencies (Infront and IMG) on various matters relating to sponsorship (implementation of commercial conditions).
- **Service providers:** the Media Team negotiates and implements contracts with various service providers (time keepers, Gracenote, freelancers, photographers, Archive project, video replay system, Skating Channel, Olympic Channel, video editors etc.).