

CAS 2025/A/11717 Evgeniy Gerganov v. Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI)

ARBITRAL AWARD

delivered by the

COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT

sitting in the following composition:

President: Dr Heiner Kahlert, Attorney-at-law, Munich, Germany
Arbitrators: Prof. Philippe Sands KC, Professor of Law, London, United Kingdom
Ms Janie Soublière, Attorney-at-law, Beaconsfield, Canada

in the arbitration between

Mr Evgeniy Balev Gerganov, Sofia, Bulgaria

Represented by Mr Michael Zhivkov Stankov and Mr Yuri Yuriev Stoykov, Attorneys-at-law,
Stankov, Todorov, Hinkov & Spasov, Sofia, Bulgaria

Appellant

and

Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), Aigle, Switzerland

Represented by Prof. Antonio Rigozzi and Mr Patrick Pithon, Attorneys-at-law, Lévy
Kaufmann-Kohler, Geneva, Switzerland

Respondent

I. PARTIES

1. Mr Evgeniy Balev Gerganov (the “Appellant” or “Mr Gerganov”) was, at the relevant and material time, the chairman of the Management Board of the Bulgarian Cycling Federation (the “BCF”).
2. The Union Cycliste Internationale (the “Respondent” or the “UCI”) is the world governing body for the sport of cycling, recognized as such by the International Olympic Committee. The UCI is a non-profit association established under Swiss law with its seat in Aigle, Switzerland. The BCF is a member federation of the UCI.
3. The Appellant and the Respondent are jointly referred to as the “Parties”.

II. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

A. Introduction

4. The present appeal was brought by Mr Gerganov against a disciplinary decision rendered on 5 August 2025 (the “Decision”) by the UCI Ethics Commission.
5. Below is a summary of the relevant facts based on the Parties’ submissions (this term includes oral pleadings and evidence adduced). Additional facts may be set out in connection with the legal discussion that follows. While the Panel has considered all facts transpiring from the Parties’ submissions, it refers in this award (the “Award”) only to the facts it considers necessary to explain its reasoning.

B. The 2024 Tour of Bulgaria

6. The 2024 edition of the Tour of Bulgaria (the “2024 Tour of Bulgaria”) was organized from 24 to 29 August 2024 by the BCF, with the Appellant acting as the Race Director. Mr Georgi Georgiev (“Mr Georgiev”), who was present in the Appellant’s car throughout the race in his function as the side-observing Commissaire, filed a report with the UCI on 6 January 2025 regarding, *inter alia*, the Appellant’s actions during the race. According to Mr Georgiev, the Appellant repeatedly disregarded Commissaires’ instructions concerning the improper positioning of his vehicle in the peloton and, when reminded of the instructions, “*often exploded and started shouting and cursing the commissaires, threatening that since he was the chairman of the BFC Board of Directors, he was the boss of everyone and if he wanted, he could fire all the commissaires and appoint new ones*”.
7. On 29 August 2024, during the final stage of the race, the Commissaires’ Panel, chaired by Mr Ivalyo Deliyskii (“Mr Deliyskii”), imposed a time penalty on a rider who had crossed the finish line in first position, adjusting his result from 1st to 15th in the stage. The Appellant refused to accept the decision and repeatedly (albeit unsuccessfully) attempted to persuade the Commissaires’ Panel to reconsider it. Eventually, the Appellant conducted the podium ceremony in disregard of the official results.
8. According to Mr Dobri Dobrev (“Mr Dobrev”), who at the time was the BCF

Commissaire Commission Chairman, the Appellant called him on 1 September 2024 and “*tried to force [him] [...] to penalize [...] Ivajlo Deliyskii with fee of 500CHF and suspension as a commissaire from 2 to 3 years*”. Mr Dobrev further stated that he refused to comply with the Appellant’s demand.

9. On 14 October 2024, the UCI opened disciplinary proceedings against the BCF for not providing suitable accommodation to some riders in the 2024 Tour of Bulgaria as well as for failure to conduct the podium ceremony in accordance with the relevant regulations, and against the Appellant personally as the Race Director for not respecting the decisions of the Commissaires’ Panel appointed for this event. The UCI proposed the imposition of fines of CHF 3,750 and CHF 7,500 on the BCF, and of CHF 5,000 on the Appellant personally, each being subject to the execution of an acceptance of consequences.
10. On 18 October 2024, the Appellant convened an extraordinary meeting of the BCF Management Board wherein, *inter alia*, he offered his resignation as the chairman of the BCF Management Board, which was not accepted. Subsequently, according to the official minutes of the said meeting, regarding the fines proposed by the UCI, the BCF Management Board discussed and resolved as follows:

“[...] In response to a question from the DK about who was responsible for the accommodation, it was established that it was Ani Petrova and Radoslav Konstantinov. DK noted that it should be recorded in the minutes that AP and RK should pay the fines to the UCI. DA noted that these people were working at an event organized by the BCF and that it was not normal to make financial claims against them. The members of the Management Board returned to discussing the next steps. The prevailing opinion was that a letter should be written to the UCI, accepting the proposal for an agreement on the part of the UCI and that the imposed sanctions should be paid. DK reiterated once again that it insists that fines should not be paid by the BCF, but by those responsible for the violations. It should be recalled once again that the organizer of the event is BCF and that financial sanctions against third parties working on the organization would have an extremely demotivating effect on subsequent organizations and team recruitment. AA proposed a vote on the proposal that the BCF should bear all the sanctions imposed by the UCI. [...]

[...] A vote was taken on the AA’s proposal that the BFC pay all imposed sanctions – general and personal:

<i>Voted</i>	<i>Vote</i>
<i>Borislav Ivanov</i>	<i>In favor</i>
<i>Danail Angelov</i>	<i>In favor</i>
<i>Yordan Donev</i>	<i>In favor</i>
<i>Alexander Alexiev</i>	<i>In favor</i>

<i>Evgeni Balev</i>	<i>In favor</i>
<i>Dragmoir Kouzov</i>	<i>Against (Via YS)</i>
<i>Georgi Lumparev</i>	<i>In favor</i>

[...]

The proposal was accepted.”¹

11. Thereafter, the Appellant signed acceptances of consequences regarding the violations committed by the BCF and by him personally, which were subsequently ratified by the UCI Disciplinary Commission. Invoices for the respective fines were initially issued by the UCI to the BCF for its violations and to the Appellant for his violation. After the Appellant asked the UCI to amend the invoices so that all outstanding fines were invoiced to the BCF, Mr Luc Bordel, Head of Finance of the UCI, responded as follows by email of 20 February 2025:

“[...] the amount of CHF 5'000 [...] corresponds to a fine imposed on you, Mr Balev, as Director of the Tour of Bulgaria [...].

In order to invoice such amount directly to the BCF, we kindly ask you to provide us with proof of the BCF's acceptance to pay this CHF 5'000 on your behalf. Proof of this could take the form of a decision of the BCF executive committee [...].“

12. Subsequently, after the Appellant shared with the UCI the minutes of the 18 October 2024 BCF Management Board meeting, the UCI reissued an invoice addressed to the BCF for the fine that had been imposed on and accepted by the Appellant. This fine was eventually paid by the BCF in April 2025.

C. Bulgarian Track Cup 2024

13. During the third round of the Bulgarian Track Cup conducted on 5 October 2024, Mr Georgi Lumparov (“Mr Lumparov”), a competitor and a member of the BCF Management Board, was disqualified by the Commissaires’ Panel. Upon his disqualification, Mr Lumparov allegedly directed insults at the Commissaires’ Panel members, which included Ms Any Petrov (“Ms Petrova”), then deputy chairwoman of the BCF Commissaire Commission.
14. On 6 October 2024, Mr Todor Kolev (“Mr Kolev”), the coach of Mr Lumparov and former coach of the Appellant, allegedly directed further insults against Ms Petrova.
15. On 10 October 2024, the chief judge of the Bulgarian Track Cup filed a complaint against Mr Lumparov to the BCF Disciplinary Commission. On an unspecified date, a separate complaint was filed by Ms Petrova regarding Mr Kolev’s actions. The BCF

¹ All citations from BCF documents and from correspondence between BCF officials are translations from Bulgarian, as submitted by the Parties in this arbitration.

Disciplinary Commission subsequently issued two decisions imposing a fine of BGN 1,000 on Mr Lumparov (BGN 500 if he apologized) and a fine of BGN 300 on Mr Kolev (BGN 150 if he apologized).

16. On 3 January 2025, the BCF Management Board discussed Mr Lumparov and Mr Kolev's appeals against the above-mentioned fines. According to the official minutes, the Appellant "*believe[d] that the fines imposed are not constructive and create unnecessary tension, and that a final warning should be imposed instead*". The BCF Management Board eventually resolved to replace the fines with final warnings.

D. The Complaints filed before the UCI Ethics Commission

17. On 9 October 2024, Mr Georgiev filed a complaint against Mr Danail Angelov ("Mr Angelov"), then vice-chairman of the BCF Management Board, to the UCI Ethics Commission, alleging several violations of, *inter alia*, the UCI Code of Ethics (the "CoE"). In subsequent submission sent to the UCI Ethics Commission in January 2025, he also reported several alleged violations of the Appellant.
18. On 14 October 2024, upon request by the President of the European Cycling Union, Mr Dragomir Kouzov ("Mr Kouzov"), former chairman and then member of the BCF Management Board, provided additional information, *inter alia* mentioning that the Appellant did not react to violations of the BCF Statutes by Mr Angelov.
19. On 6 November 2024, Mr Asen Radev Tamahkyarov ("Mr Tamahkyarov"), a UCI/BCF-licensed Commissaire and then member of the BCF Disciplinary Commission, filed a complaint through the UCI SpeakUp platform against several persons, mentioning *inter alia* that the Appellant had pressured him not to file any complaint against Mr Angelov and others.
20. On 13 November 2024, Mr Dobrev and Ms Petrova jointly filed a complaint to the UCI Ethics Commission against several individuals, including the Appellant, for interference in the operations of the BCF Commissaire Commission, undue pressure, and regulatory violations. Ms Petrova filed another complaint on 27 January 2025 alleging further misconduct by the BCF Management Board, *inter alia*, regarding its overturning fines imposed by the BCF Disciplinary Commission on Mr Lumparov and Mr Kolev.

E. The General Assembly on 11 December 2024

21. On 11 December 2024, during a BCF General Assembly, Mr Ivailo Gabrovski, who was the coach of Bulgarian national team at the time, verbally insulted Mr Kouzov and others present at the meeting. No action was taken against Mr Gabrovski.

F. The Petition for an extraordinary BCF General Assembly

22. On 14 November 2024, Mr Georgiev sent an email to the BCF Management Board, copying BCF member clubs, which reads as follows in its relevant part:

“While you cling to the Management Board like drowning men clinging to a straw, while Your only activity is in the name of staying in power longer, while a guy with a neat hairstyle, a well-arranged smile, and a cow-like smack has usurped everything in mountain biking, while another one of you yells and threatens judges during a competition, while the Management Board decides to pay the personal fines of its chairman, at the same time, gentlemen of the Management Board, parallel organizations are being created, directly related to cycling and largely taking over the function of the BCF.

While we, the clubs, members of the BCF, are busy defending our rights from you, we have no time left for our actual work, and other organizations will replace us. If we continue like this, in a few years the BFC will remain an unnecessary organization!

RESIGN IMMEDIATELY, GET OUT OF THE FEDERATION!!!!”

23. In December 2024, Mr Georgiev began collecting signatures from BCF member clubs for a petition requesting that the BCF Management Board convene an extraordinary BCF General Assembly to elect a new BCF Management Board. According to Ms Bilyana Doycheva, who had signed the petition as chairperson of a BCF member club, the Appellant called her on 16 December 2024 and tried to persuade her to retract her signature from the petition, saying *inter alia* that if she did so, he would help her son, a young cyclist, be selected to the national team.
24. On 23 December 2024, the above-mentioned petition, which had been signed by twenty clubs, was submitted to the BCF Management Board.
25. At some point between 23 and 29 January 2025, after the BCF Management Board had failed to initiate an extraordinary BCF General Assembly as requested, Mr Georgiev’s club (“Kurbel”) and other clubs filed an application to the Sofia City Court seeking an order on the holding of an extraordinary BCF General Assembly (the application was eventually upheld on 13 March 2025 and the Assembly was scheduled for 25 May 2025).

G. BCF Management Board meeting of 5 February 2025

26. On 5 February 2025, a meeting of the BCF Management Board was held. The official minutes of the meeting state that *“Dragomir Kouzov has valid health reasons and is abroad and has notified that he can only participate partially and remotely.”* Moreover, the minutes record that, among other things, the BCF Management Board took the following resolutions:
 - Mr Georgiev’s club, Kurbel, was expelled from the BCF, while Mr Georgiev was banned for lifetime from cycling-related activities, for alleged *“failure to comply with the obligations imposed by the Articles of Association, as well as systematic violation of the Articles of Association of the BFC, damage to the prestige and interests of the BFC, insults and slander.”*
 - Ms Petrova was fined with BGN 2,000 and received a two-year suspension of her license as a Commissaire, due to alleged breaches of her duties as Technical

Secretary of the BCF (“*withdrawal of access to [BCF] management systems and documents with the aim of sabotaging the work of the [BCF], breach of confidentiality of information, damage to the prestige of the [BCF] and threat to the financing of the [BCF] by its sponsors, deliberate non-payment of fees owed to judges*”), and for allegedly having requested money from the BCF to compensate for damage that she herself had caused.

- Mr Dobrev was fined with BGN 1,000 and received a two-year suspension of his license as a Commissaire (BGN 500 and a one-year suspension if he apologized), due to alleged “*interference and sabotage of the work of the BFC; personal insults and slander against the management of the BFC and cycling competitors; unfounded financial claims against the BFC; deliberately delaying the sharing of competition reports and failing to monitor the sending of competition reports in his capacity as chairman of the RSC*”.
- A proposal was to be made to the next BCF General Assembly to remove Mr Kouzov from his position as a BCF Management Board member, mainly due to his allegedly continuous absence from meetings of the BCF Management Board.

27. According to the meeting minutes, the Appellant voted in favour of each of the above resolutions. The minutes further reflect that it was the Appellant, together with two other members, who proposed the lifetime ban against Mr Georgiev, and that he also proposed the sanctions against Ms Petrova and Mr Dobrev.

H. BCF Management Board Meeting on 19 March 2025

28. On 19 March 2025, the BCF Management Board held another meeting. After resignation of its then chairwoman, Ms Galia Khachadurian (“Ms Khachadurian”), the BCF Management Board decided, among other things, to dissolve the BCF Disciplinary Committee.
29. On 26 March 2025, Mr Tamahkyarov filed a further complaint to the UCI Ethics Commission against several individuals, including the Appellant, alleging the wrongful dissolution of the BCF Disciplinary Committee, in which Mr Tamahkyarov had been member.

I. BCF Management Board Meeting on 23 May 2025

30. At a further meeting held on 23 May 2025, the BCF Management Board reviewed a complaint filed against Mr Tamahkyarov by Mr Alexander Hadzhiev, a board member of Mr Angelov’s club Riders United. The complaint related to Mr Tamahkyarov’s alleged failure to timely submit a report as Chief Commissaire of the race “The Call of the Wild DH 2024”, which had been staged on 2/3 November 2024. According to the official minutes of the meeting, the BCF Management Board resolved to impose a (unspecified) sanction on Mr Tamahkyarov, with the Appellant voting in favour.
31. On an unspecified date thereafter, Mr Tamahkyarov received an email from the BCF Commissaire Commission informing him that he had been suspended for three months

as a Commissaire for failing to submit the above-mentioned report in a timely manner.

J. BCF General Assembly on 30 June 2025

32. At the BCF General Assembly held on 30 June 2025, a vote was taken on an “*appeal*” against the BCF Management Board’s decision of 5 February 2025 to sanction Kurbel and Mr Georgiev. According to the official minutes, Mr Georgiev took the floor and argued that the authorship of the emails underlying the sanctions remained unproven. In response, the Appellant referred to hundreds of emails sent from Kurbel’s mailbox and with Mr Georgiev’s signature as representative of Kurbel. The General Assembly resolved to dismiss the appeal.
33. Moreover, after the Appellant explained that Mr Kouzov had been absent from the BCF Management Board too many times, the BCF General Assembly resolved to remove Mr Kouzov from the BCF Management Board.

K. Decision of the UCI Ethics Commission

34. The UCI Ethics Commission issued the Decision on 5 August 2025 further to having received the complaints from Mr Georgiev, Mr Dobrev, Ms Petrova and Mr Tamahkyarov as well as additional information from other persons, and after the Appellant had been given the opportunity to make written submissions on the allegations against him. The Decision was notified to the Appellant by email on the same day. The operative part of the Decision reads as follows:

“The UCI Ethics Commission:

1. decides that Mr Gerganov has committed breaches of Articles 5, 6.4, read together with Articles 2.1 and 3.1 of Appendix 1, as well as Article 7.4 of the UCI Code of Ethics;

2. imposes a ban on Mr Gerganov for a period of two (2) years, effective as from the notification of this decision, from holding any position as administrator, board member, director, staff member, committee member, or other elected or appointed role within the administration of the BCF or the UCI or any of its other members or affiliates, and from organising or holding any position as an official, event organiser, or other role related to the organisation of any event in relation to any cycling events or cycling-related activities, whether organised by the UCI, its members, affiliates, or any other entity. For the avoidance of doubt, this does not preclude Mr Gerganov from attending cycling events, participating in cycling-related business (other than the organisation of events), or involvement in cycling clubs or teams;

3. imposes a fine of CHF 10,000 to be paid by Mr Gerganov to UCI within 30 days of receipt of the corresponding invoice from the UCI;

4. orders that Mr Gerganov shall bear the procedural costs of this matter amounting to CHF 1,000, in accordance with Article 36 of the UCI Code of

Ethics.”

III. PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT

35. On 25 August 2025, the Appellant filed an appeal against the Decision before the Court of Arbitration for Sport (the “CAS”) and submitted his Statement of Appeal pursuant to Article R48 of the Code of Sports-related Arbitration (2023 edition) (the “CAS Code”). In his Statement of Appeal, the Appellant nominated Prof. Philippe Sands KC as arbitrator and filed a request for a stay of execution.
36. On 27 August 2025, the CAS Court Office invited the Appellant to file his Appeal Brief and the Respondent to nominate an arbitrator and file its position on the Appellant’s request for a stay of execution.
37. On 4 September 2025, the Appellant filed his Appeal Brief.
38. On 8 September 2025, the Respondent provided its position on the Appellant’s request for a stay of execution.
39. On 15 September 2025, within the time limit as previously extended, the Respondent nominated Ms Janie Soublière as arbitrator.
40. On 27 October 2025, the President of the CAS Appeals Arbitration Division dismissed the request for a stay of execution.
41. On the same day the Respondent filed its Answer.
42. On 28 October 2025, the CAS Court Office informed the Parties that the President of the CAS Appeals Arbitration Division had appointed Dr Heiner Kahlert as the President of the Panel.
43. On 4 November 2025, the Appellant filed a challenge against the appointment of Dr Kahlert (the “Challenge”).
44. On 17 November 2025, the CAS Court Office forwarded the comments provided by Dr Kahlert and the Respondent on the Challenge to the Parties and invited the Appellant to confirm if he wished to maintain his challenge.
45. On 5 December 2025, the Appellant stated that he maintained the Challenge.
46. On 21 January 2026, the CAS Court Office informed the Parties that the Challenge Commission of the International Council Arbitration for Sport had dismissed the Challenge.
47. On 22 January 2026, the CAS Court Office informed the Parties that the Panel appointed to decide the present procedure was constituted as follows:

President: Dr Heiner Kahlert, Attorney-at-law in Munich, Germany

Arbitrators: Prof. Philippe Sands KC, Professor of Law in London, United Kingdom

Ms Janie Soublière, Attorney-at-law in Beaconsfield, QC, Canada.

48. On 2 February 2026, the CAS Court Office, on behalf of the Panel invited the Parties to indicate, *inter alia*, whether (i) they preferred for a hearing to be held in this matter, (ii) they would be open to holding a joint hearing in both cases CAS 2025/A/11716 and CAS 2025/A/11717, (iii) they requested a case management conference and (iv) any of their witnesses would require interpretation, if a hearing were to be held.
49. On the same day, the Appellant stated that he requested a hearing via videoconference and that he did not object to a joint hearing being held in CAS 2025/A/11716 and CAS 2025/A/11717. Further, the Appellant requested that a case management conference be held.
50. On 19 February 2026, the Respondent stated that it did not consider a hearing or case management conference necessary but that, should the Panel decide to hold a hearing, it would not be opposed to holding a joint hearing in both CAS 2025/A/11716 and CAS 2025/A/11717 and would request that the hearing be held by videoconference.
51. On 4 March 2026, the CAS Court Office informed the Parties that the Panel had decided to hold a hearing by videoconferencing and invited the Parties to provide written witness statements.
52. On 24 March 2026, after having consulted the Parties, the CAS Court Office informed the Parties that a hearing would be held on 27 April 2026 by videoconference.
53. On 31 March 2026, the Appellant filed written statements.
54. On 1 April 2026, the CAS Court Office informed the Parties, among other things, that the Panel had decided not to hold a case management conference. The Parties were also invited to indicate which of the other Party's witnesses they would seek to cross-examine.
55. On 7 April 2026 and 13 April 2026, respectively, the Parties indicated the names of the witnesses they sought to cross-examine.
56. On 21 April 2026, the CAS Court Office informed the Parties that the Panel had decided to hold a joint hearing in CAS 2025/A/11716 and CAS 2025/A/11717, and to hear Mr Spas Nikolov, Ms Ivanova-Dimitrova, Mr Georgi Georgiev and Mr Asen Radev Tamahkyarov as witnesses.
57. On the same day, the BCF sent a "*petition for support*" of the Appellant to the CAS Court Office.
58. On 23 April 2026, the Respondent objected to the petition for support to be admitted to the case file, noting that the requirements for the BCF to intervene in the arbitration pursuant to Article R41.3 of the CAS Code were manifestly not met.
59. On 24 April 2026, the CAS Court Office informed the Parties that the Panel had decided not to admit the BCF's letter of 21 April 2026 to the record.

60. On 27 April 2026, a hearing was held by videoconference. In addition to the members of the Panel and Ms Andrea Sherpa-Zimmerman, CAS Counsel, the following persons attended the hearing:
61. For the Appellant: Mr Evgeniy Balev Gerganov, Appellant
 Mr Danail Petrov Angelov, Appellant in CAS 2025/A/11716
 Mr Michael Zhivkov Stankov, Counsel
 Mr Yuri Yuriev Stoykov, Counsel
 Ms Katerina Ivanova-Dimitrova, Witness
 Mr Spas Nikolov, Witness in CAS 2025/A/11716
 Mr Hristo Nikolaev Hinkov, Interpreter
- For the Respondent: Prof. Antonio Rigozzi, Counsel
 Mr Patrick Pithon, Counsel
 Mr Georgi Georgiev, Witness
 Mr Asen Radev Tamahkyarov, Witness
 Ms Zlatka Chervenкова, Interpreter
62. At the outset of the hearing, the Parties confirmed that they had no objections as to the constitution of the Panel or to the procedure adopted up to that point. After the Parties' opening arguments, the Panel heard evidence from the above-listed witnesses. Before taking their evidence, the President of the Panel admonished the witnesses that they were obliged to tell the truth subject to sanctions of perjury under Swiss law. The Parties had the opportunity to examine, respectively cross-examine, each witness, with a further opportunity for re-direct, respectively re-cross. After the Parties' closing arguments, the Appellant used the opportunity to address the Panel in person. Prior to the closing of the hearing, the Parties confirmed that they were satisfied with the procedure throughout the hearing, and that their right to be heard and to be treated equally had been fully respected.
63. On 28 April 2026, the CAS Court Office informed the Parties of the closure of the evidentiary proceedings, and that the arbitral award would be rendered within four months.
64. On 29 and 30 July 2026, respectively, the Parties returned a duly signed copy the Order of Procedure to the CAS Court Office.

IV. POSITION OF THE PARTIES AND REQUESTS FOR RELIEF

65. The aim of this section of the Award is to provide a summary, rather than a comprehensive list, of the Parties' main arguments. However, the Panel confirms that in deciding this case, it has carefully considered all submissions made, regardless of whether there is any specific reference to them in this Award.

A. The Appellant

66. The Appellant's submissions, in essence, may be summarised as follows:

1. Jurisdiction and admissibility

67. CAS has jurisdiction pursuant to Article 35 of the CoE. The appeal was filed within the applicable deadline of 21 days, per Article R49 of the CAS Code.

2. Standard and burden of proof

68. As per Article 30(2) of the CoE, the standard of proof is comfortable satisfaction. The CoE does not address the burden of proof. However, in line with Article 8 of the Swiss Civil Code and general legal principles, the burden of proof falls on the UCI, being the party asserting facts to derive certain rights from it.

3. The Decision suffers from significant procedural violations

69. Even though the Decision claims that all submissions and evidence were carefully reviewed, the only evidence that was in fact analysed was the information provided by the whistleblowers. Contrary to the Decision's finding, the whistleblowers are not independent witnesses. Instead, Mr Georgiev, Mr Kouzov, Ms Doycheva and Mr Tamahkyarov were candidates for the BCF Management Board at the BCF General Assembly held on 25 May 2025, trying to usurp power in the BCF. They are seriously biased against the Appellant, who is held in high esteem in the Bulgarian and international cycling community and continues to enjoy the trust of the majority of the members of the BCF. The fact that the complaints against the Appellant came almost immediately after his election as a member of the BCF Management Board, and from people with ambitions to occupy the same position, shows that there is a high likelihood that the allegations made are greatly exaggerated, if not entirely false.

70. Moreover, the UCI Ethics Commission misconceived the role of the chairman of the BCF Management Board under the BCF Statutes. He does not have any management powers that differ from those of the other members of the BCF Management Board. In particular, he has no veto right or casting vote and he cannot appoint or dismiss members of any BCF body. Neither can he take unilateral decisions as all decisions are taken by majority vote within the BCF Management Board, which is composed of seven members, each nominated by a different BCF member club. The whistleblowers' allegations of personal close relationships between the Appellant and four other members of the BCF Management Board are solely their interpretation of the facts and are not supported by any evidence. In the absence of such evidence, the Appellant cannot be required to prove a negative fact.

71. Finally, most of the actions that, according to the Decision, constituted a violation of the CoE, were in fact initiated by another BCF body or were reviewed by the BCF General Assembly. In particular, the proposal to replace members of the BCF Disciplinary Commission came from the BCF Control Board. The penalties imposed on Kurbel and Mr Georgiev were confirmed by the BCF General Assembly, while the

removal of Mr Kouzov from the BCF Management Board was only proposed by the BCF Management Board, and decided entirely by the BCF General Assembly.

4. No violation of Article 5(3) of the CoE (abuse of position)

72. First, regarding the fine that the UCI imposed on the Appellant in relation to the 2024 Tour of Bulgaria, Mr Luc Bordel, a UCI official, had informed the Appellant by email that it was permissible for the BCF to pay the Appellant's personal fine, provided that the relevant body of the BCF took a decision to that effect. This is precisely what happened, and the UCI cannot now categorize as a violation conduct previously authorized by one of its representatives.
73. Second, the dissolution of the BCF Disciplinary Commission was not an act of retaliation against Mr Tamahkyarov. Instead, complaints filed to the BCF Disciplinary Commission had been systematically lost, as evidenced by a contemporaneous email to the BCF Disciplinary Commission signed by the majority of the BCF CC members. Despite this letter, the then members of the BCF Disciplinary Committee continued their inaction, thereby sabotaging the work of an important BCF body. Mr Tamahkyarov's inaction specifically is due to his personal ambitions and constitutes open sabotage aimed at discrediting the current BCF Management Board, thereby creating the conditions for the subsequent reports to the UCI. It should also be noted that the dissolution of the BCF Disciplinary Commission was not directed solely at Mr Tamahkyarov. Rather, all members were removed, including Ms Khachadurian, is alleged by the whistleblowers to have a close relationship with the Appellant.
74. Third, the decisions to impose sanctions against Mr Georgiev and Kurbel were justified under the applicable rules. As to Mr Georgiev, he demonstrated inappropriate and offensive behaviour towards various individuals including club representatives, members of the BCF Management Board and employees of the BCF. He was repeatedly warned that his behaviour was not in line with the BCF Statutes and may be subject to sanctions. He was also invited to explain his behaviour and to attend the 5 February 2025 meeting of the BCF Management Board in person. Pursuant to Article 46 of the BCF Statutes, the BCF Management Board may expel a BCF member who systematically violates the BCF Statutes or damages the prestige and interests of the BCF. Regarding Mr Kouzov, his removal from the BCF Management Board was justified under Article 25.2 of the BCF Statutes, which provides that a member of the BCF Management Board may be replaced if they fail to attend more than three meetings within a 12-month period. The removal of Mr Kouzov was not a punishment but rather a measure aimed at ensuring the normal functioning of the Management Board.

5. No violation of Article 6.4 (psychological abuse)

75. The Appellant accepts that his behaviour during the 2024 Tour of Bulgaria was not in line with UCI rules. However, as he had already been punished for it prior to the Decision, the additional sanction imposed for the same behaviour in the Decision is inadmissible as it violates the fundamental legal principle of *ne bis in idem*.

76. Further, as regards Mr Gabrovski's behaviour during the 11 December 2024 General Assembly, as the chair of the BCF Management Board, the Appellant does not have any special powers during the General Assembly. Hence, he cannot be accused and sanctioned for passively tolerating Mr Gabrovski's behaviour (as did many others, including the whistleblowers).

6. No violation of Article 7.4 of the CoE (conflict of interest)

77. The investigation found no evidence that the Appellant had a conflict of interest in any specific situation. Consequently, the Decision erred in finding that Ms Khachadurian's position as chair of the BCF Disciplinary Commission gave rise to a conflict of interest because she is also the Appellant's personal lawyer. That finding is contradicted by Ms Khachadurian's support for the BCF Disciplinary Commission's decision to sanction Mr Lumparov and his coach, Mr Kolev, even though the whistleblowers alleged that Mr Lumparov and the Appellant had a close personal relationship.

7. The sanctions imposed are excessive

78. The UCI Ethics Commission acted *ultra vires* because the sanctions it imposed are not even provided for in the CoE. This applies, in particular, to the ban from holding positions within national federations. Article 34.2 of the CoE is too general, fails to set out a minimum and maximum duration of the penalty and lacks clarity as to what the ban includes.
79. In any event, the sanctions imposed are disproportionate to the alleged conduct. Although CAS jurisprudence affords discretion to international federations when imposing sanctions, the Panel is entitled to review the sanction imposed if the appealed decision lacks any reasoning as to how the sanctioning body arrived at the specific sanction (CAS 2016/A/4558). Notably, lighter penalties were imposed in other proceedings for much more serious violations, such as in CAS 2017/A/5086. In addition, according to CAS jurisprudence, the UCI Ethics Commission should have considered, *inter alia*, the gravity of the infringement. In this context, it is relevant that the breaches found in the Decision are not connected to bribery, corruption, manipulation of sports event or doping, which are all significantly more hurtful to sport.
80. Moreover, per CAS jurisprudence, mitigating circumstances should have been considered (CAS 2011/A/2645). Due to the Appellant's brief participation in the BCF's management and his lack of previous management experience, it is possible that some of his mistakes could be interpreted as negligent. Furthermore, since the election of the BCF Management Board chaired by the Appellant, the BCF has seen a significant increase in the number of UCI licences issued to competitors, especially amount young people.
81. Finally, the same actions are the basis for three violations identified by the UCI Ethics Commission. The payment of the Appellant's personal fine by the BCF as well as the removal of Mr Kouzov from the BCF Management Board were each considered a violation of both Article 5(3) and Article 7.4 of the CoE. Similarly, the imposition of sanctions on Kurbel and others was deemed a violation under Article 5(3) and Article

6.4 of the CoE. Accordingly, the Appellant was punished twice for the same offence, in violation of *ne bis in idem*. The UCI Ethics Commission thereby artificially increased the severity of the violations resulting in the Decision's imposition of a particularly severe penalty.

82. In his Statement of Appeal and Appeal Brief, the Appellant requested the following relief:

“Following the arguments to the statement of appeal and this appeal brief, the Appellant respectfully requests the Panel to:

- 1. Annul the Decision of the UCI Ethics Commission dated August 5, 2025;*
- 2. Alternatively, annul the sanctions imposed therein and replace them with a proportionate sanction, such as a reprimand or educational measure;*
- iii. Stay the execution of the Decision pending the final award;*
- iv. Order the Respondent to bear the costs of arbitration and a contribution towards the Appellant's legal fees”.*

B. The Respondent

83. The Respondent's submissions, in essence, may be summarised as follows:

1. Jurisdiction and admissibility

84. The Respondent accepts CAS jurisdiction. It also does not dispute the admissibility of the appeal.

2. Standard and burden of proof

85. The Respondent does not dispute that it bears the burden of proof regarding the existence of the offences, per CAS jurisprudence and Article 8 of the Swiss Civil Code. The applicable standard of proof is comfortable satisfaction per Article 30.2 CoE, which also provides that any kind of evidence is admissible and that the panel is free to assess the admissibility, relevance, materiality and weight of the evidence at its best judgment (CAS 2013/A/3444, para. 88). Even though the Panel enjoys *de novo* powers under Article R57 of the CAS Code, the Panel should afford a certain margin of deference to the first-instance body, in particular regarding the assessment of the credibility of the witnesses (CAS 2012/A/2924, para. 48).

3. The Decision does not suffer from procedural irregularities

86. While the Appellant claims procedural irregularities before the UCI Ethics Commission, he does not identify any specific procedural rule that was allegedly breached, nor does he explain how such irregularity would have affected due process. He was provided with full access to the file and had multiple opportunities to make submissions. In any case, his baseless procedural criticism is irrelevant given the *de novo* hearing before CAS.

4. Violation of Article 5(3) of the CoE (abuse of position)

87. The Appellant clearly held a position of authority or influence within the BCF. In particular, Article 12(1)(d) of the BCF Statutes lists the chairman of the BCF Management Board as a governing body of the BCF. Moreover, Article 28(1) of the BCF Statutes confers extensive powers on the chairman, e.g. to direct the activities of the BCF Management Board, to represent the BCF vis-à-vis third parties and to impose disciplinary sanctions. In any event, even his status as a member of the BCF Management Board suffices to qualify the Appellant as holding a position of authority for the purposes of Article 5(3) of the CoE. The evidence establishes that the Appellant abused that position in multiple instances, revealing a pattern of suppressing dissent and protecting the Appellant's own position.
88. First, after the UCI had imposed a fine on him for misbehaving during the 2024 Tour of Bulgaria, the Appellant used his position to secure the BCF's payment of his personal fine, thereby misappropriating institutional resources for his personal benefit. Contrary to his argument, the UCI did not authorise the BCF to pay the fine on his behalf. In the relevant email, Mr Bordel expressly informed the Appellant that the fine was imposed on him and that it should therefore be paid by him. Mr Bordel merely noted (rightly) that a corresponding internal BCF decision would be required for BCF to pay the fine on the Appellant's behalf. The BCF Management Board decided to pay the fine with the Appellant's direct's involvement as opposed to it being a UCI decision. According to the minutes of the relevant meeting, the discussion only dealt with the fines of two other individuals, and the Appellant did not even disclose that such decision would also mean that the BCF will cover his personal fine. Instead of making such disclosure, or recusing himself from the vote, the Appellant voted in favour of the proposal, thereby using his position to secure a decision that directly served his private interest, thus plainly abusing his position.
89. Second, to retaliate against Mr Deliyskii for duly officiating the 2024 Tour of Bulgaria, the Appellant repeatedly called Mr Dobrev, then chairman of the BCF Commissaires Commission, trying to force him to sanction Mr Deliyski with a fine of CHF 500 and a suspension as a Commissaire for two to three years. The findings of the UCI Ethics Commission in this regard remain uncontested by the Appellant and must be considered established for the purpose of these proceedings.
90. Third, the Appellant attempted to influence Ms Doycheva, one of the signatories to the petition seeking the election of a new BCF Management Board, to withdraw her support. Upon her refusal, he even attempted to use her son, a young cyclist, to exert additional pressure. The Appellant does not contest Ms Doycheva's characterization of the call or the UCI Ethics Commission's finding in this regard. The Appellant did not seek to cross-examine Ms Doycheva at the hearing. Accordingly, the UCI Ethics' Commissions findings stand unchallenged in this regard as well.
91. Fourth, in retaliation for Mr Georgiev's supporting the request to call an extraordinary BCF General Assembly, the Appellant advocated for the imposition of a lifetime ban against Mr Georgiev and the expulsion of his club Kurbel from the BCF. The Appellant does not even deny being at the origin of those sanctions. His justification for the

sanctions is entirely unsubstantiated. Any offensive emails sent by Mr Georgiev might have warranted a sanction against him personally, but not against Kurbel. Moreover, the emails relied upon by the Appellant to incriminate Mr Georgiev contain no language that could reasonably be considered offensive, much less sufficient to justify the imposition of the harshest sanctions conceivable. This notably holds true when considering that Mr Angelov was merely fined with BGN 300 for making an insulting remark towards a child. This disparity demonstrates that the sanctions were not imposed as a consequence to inappropriate emails. The retaliatory nature of the sanctions imposed on Mr Georgiev is further confirmed by the undisputed chronology of events, the fact that the minutes of the relevant BCF Management Board meeting explicitly refer to the petition to the Sofia City Court right before discussion of those sanctions, and the absence of any disciplinary proceedings and opportunity for Mr Georgiev to be heard prior to said sanctions being imposed. That the BCF General Assembly subsequently confirmed these measures is irrelevant. This does not dispel the finding that the sanctions were retaliatory. Abusing disciplinary powers to get rid of political opponents is one of the traditional and most appalling examples of abuse of power by sports administrators.

92. Fifth, upon the Appellant's proposal, the BCF Management Board resolved to impose both a fine and a two-year suspension of Ms Petrova's Commissaire licence. Nothing indicates that the BCF Disciplinary Commission was seized of the matter, that Mr Petrova was informed of the allegations against her, or that she was given an opportunity to be heard. The sanctions imposed were a direct act of retaliation based on her being perceived as the Appellant's opponent. Also, Ms Petrova had not only filed several complaints to the UCI Ethics Commission exposing misconduct on the part of the Appellant's and his close associates, but lodged two complaints before the BCF Disciplinary Commission against Mr Lumparov, a close ally of the Appellant, and his coach, Mr Kolev. While the BCF Disciplinary Commission initially fined Mr Kolev and Mr Lumparov, the Appellant made sure on the one hand that the BCF Management Board would overstep the prerogatives of the BCF Disciplinary Commission and simply replace those fines with a mere warning, and on the other hand that Ms Petrova would be sanctioned for initiating the proceedings against them and the fines that had followed. The close temporal proximity between these events, the absence of any due process, and the fact that these disproportionate measures were initiated and supported by the Appellant, combined with the stark contrast between the lenient warning imposed on his allies and the harsh punishment inflicted on one of his opponents, leave no doubt that the sanctions against Ms Petrova were motivated by reprisal rather than by any legitimate disciplinary concern. The Appellant did not even address, let alone rebut, the Decision's finding that the disciplinary sanctions against Ms Petrova were retaliatory, which finding therefore stands unchallenged and must be considered established for the purpose of this arbitration.
93. Sixth, upon the Appellant's proposal, the BCF Management Board resolved to impose both a fine and a two-year suspension of Mr Dobrev's Commissaire licencee. These sanctions were clearly motivated by reprisal, particularly as Mr Dobrev had openly opposed the Appellant's request to sanction the national Commissaire at the 2024 Tour of Bulgaria, a stance that made Mr Dobrev's one of the Appellant's identified

dissenters. In addition, Mr Dobrev had filed a formal complaint with the UCI Ethics Commission just three months prior to the sanctions being imposed on him. Once again, the Appellant did not even address, let alone rebut, the Decision's finding that the disciplinary sanctions against Mr Dobrev were a retaliatory act by the Appellant, which finding therefore stands unchallenged and must be considered established for the purpose of this arbitration.

94. Seventh, the Appellant's rationalizations for Mr Kouzov's removal from the BCF Management Board are unconvincing because the minutes of the relevant meeting show that Mr Kouzov's absence in that meeting was justified. Instead, the removal was engineered to get rid of a dissenting member who had criticized the Appellant's conduct and governance practices. The Appellant does not contest that he took the initiative of the decision against Mr Kouzov.
95. Eighth, as reflected in the minutes of the BCF Management Board meeting of 19 March 2025, following the resignation of the chair of the BCF Disciplinary Commission, the Appellant personally proposed that the BCF Disciplinary Commission be dissolved altogether and, as a consequence, removed another dissenter, Mr Tamahkyarov, from a body of the BCF. The alleged letter signed by the majority of the BCF Control Board members proposing its dissolution appears, in fact, to have been signed only by one individual, Ms Katerina Ivanova-Dimitrov. In any event, that letter does not demonstrate that the BCF Disciplinary Commission failed to perform its functions. The evidence indicates that the dissolution of the BCF Disciplinary Commission was not motivated by any alleged failure to perform its obligations but rather by the Appellant's dissatisfaction with a body that had shown too much independence for his liking and had also dared sanctioning his close allies.
96. Ninth, sanctions imposed on Mr Tamahkyarov were based on a bogus complaint made to the BCF Management Board under highly questionable circumstances. First, the allegation that he had failed to submit a report for a race held in November 2024 is incorrect, as confirmed to the BCF at the time by Mr Dobrev. Second, the bogus complaint was filed three months after the race by a member of Mr Angelov's club. Third, the sanctions were imposed shortly after the BCF Management Board received the UCI Ethics Commission's investigation case file including Mr Tamahkyarov's latest complaint regarding the BCF Management Board's wrongful dissolution of the BCF. Hence, the sanctions were clearly a retaliatory measure against Mr Tamahkyarov.

5. Violation of Article 6.4 of the CoE (psychological abuse)

97. The Appellant engaged in a systematic pattern of conduct that amounts to psychological abuse and intimidation within the meaning of Article 6.4 of the CoE and Article 2.1 of its Appendix 1. His repeated attempts to silence dissent, isolate critics and instil fear among members of the BCF reveal a consistent disregard for the mental integrity and personal dignity of those who opposed him.
98. First, his constant retaliatory actions constitute a textbook example of psychological abuse. The timing, coordination, and deliberate targeting of these measures demonstrate a sustained campaign of intimidation aimed at suppressing criticism and deterring

others from speaking out.

99. Second, by trying to dissuade Ms Doycheva from supporting the initiative aimed at electing a new BCF Management Board and attempting to exploit her son's sporting ambitions, the Appellant committed a particularly egregious and unacceptable form of psychological abuse that combined manipulation, intimidation, and emotional pressure.
100. Third, acting simultaneously as President of the BCF Management Board and Race Director of the 2024 Tour of Bulgaria, the Appellant openly shouted, verbally assaulted and threatened Commissaires during the event. Thereafter, he even tried to pressure Mr Dobrev into sanctioning Mr Deliyskii. He acted in complete disregard for the independence of race officials, the integrity of their functions and their dignity, all amounting to psychological abuse.
101. Fourth, as testified by Mr Georgiev, during the General Assembly held on 11 December 2024, the Appellant (alongside others) openly mocked Mr Kouzov, thereby humiliating him in front of the assembly. The Appellant does not challenge Mr Georgiev's evidence, let alone provide evidence rebutting it.
102. Fifth, during the same General Assembly, the Appellant passively tolerated and appeared to endorse the aggressive behaviour of Mr Gabrovski, the newly appointed national team coach who subjected Mr Kouzov, Mr Georgiev and others to insults and threats, as confirmed by multiple witnesses. The Appellant's argument that the chairman of the BCF Management Board does not possess any special powers during the BCF General Assembly is unconvincing. Not only is it more than doubtful that he is powerless during a General Assembly, but he has in any event the moral duty to intervene, if only by asking to take the floor to ensure or at least order an ethical conduct during his federation's official meetings, particularly when abusive behaviour occurred in his presence. In any event, the Appellant committed a clear and serious failure to fulfil his reporting obligation under Article 3.1 of Appendix 1 of the CoE.
103. Sixth, Mr Tamahkyarov also described being subject to a pattern of intimidatory conduct after filing concerns about manipulated start lists with the UCI. Not only was he removed from the BCF Disciplinary Committee and suspended, but he also received threats from the Appellant and his associates not to pursue further complaints. Mr Tamahkyarov even feared for his son, who is an active rider, and therefore requested the UCI Ethics Commission to refrain from forwarding his complaints to the Appellant.

6. Violation of Article 7.4 of the CoE (conflict of interest)

104. The Appellant failed to avoid or disclose multiple situations of conflict of interest arising from his dual capacity as chairman of the BCF Management Board and beneficiary of decisions taken under his own authority.
105. The most egregious example concerns the fine the UCI imposed on the Appellant in relation to the 2024 Tour of Bulgaria, which was eventually paid by the BCF further to a BCF Management Board vote in which the Appellant participated. The Appellant acted in an official decision-making capacity whilst having a direct personal and

financial interest in the outcome of the vote. By failing to disclose his private interest or to abstain from voting on an issue directly affecting his personal situation, the Appellant created a situation of both actual and perceived lack of impartiality and integrity in the exercise of his duties. This even more serious considering that the Appellant's conduct was not only incompatible with the most basic principles of good governance and the CoE, but also blatantly violated Article 21(1) of the BCF Statutes which provides under Article 21(1) that "*A member of the BCF, members of the Managing Board [...] shall not have the right to vote when decisions concern: themselves [...]*".

106. In addition, the Appellant maintained a close and longstanding personal and professional relationship with Ms Khachadurian, who at the relevant time served as chair of the BCF Disciplinary Commission. As confirmed by Ms Petrova, the two were from the same town, had previously cooperated within the same political party and were in client-attorney relationship. The Appellant does not dispute this relationship. Instead, he argues that it would be illogical to allege a conflict because Ms Khachadurian had once supported a sanction against one of his allies, Mr Lumparov. This argument misses the point because the existence of a conflict of interest under Article 7.4 of the CoE does not depend on whether the conflicted individual acted in the Appellant's favour in every instance, but on whether their objectivity may be perceived as being influenced by a private or personal connection. The overlap between Ms Khachadurian's personal, professional, and political ties with the Appellant created at minimum a perceived, and therefore prohibited, conflict of interest. The Appellant, however, took no action to address or mitigate the conflict, which created a legitimate perception that disciplinary justice within the BCF was neither independent nor impartial, but under the Appellant's control.

7. The sanctions are not disproportionate

107. CAS jurisprudence consistently recognises that internal disciplinary bodies enjoy broad discretion when determining both the type and the extent of a sanction. CAS panels have repeatedly held that they will not easily "*tinker*" with a well-reasoned sanction but rather intervene only when the measure is evidently and grossly disproportionate to the offence (CAS 2011/A/2645, para. 44). Contrary to the Appellant's argument, the Decision is far from lacking reasoning on the circumstances that influenced the sanction imposed on the Appellant as was the case in CAS 2016/A/4558 which the Appellant relies on. Accordingly, there is no basis to depart from the well-established principle of deference to internal bodies when assessing the proportionality of the sanction.
108. If anything, the sanction imposed on the Appellant is extremely lenient, given the severity and multitude of the violations he has committed. The Appellant's attempt to downplay the gravity of his misconduct by highlighting that he did not engage in bribery, corruption, manipulation of sports event or doping, is not only alarming but reveals a complete lack of self-awareness and remorse. The breaches established in this case are far from minor misconducts. They strike at the very heart of sporting governance. Systematic retaliation, intimidation of officials, manipulation of internal processes, and misuse of federation funds by a sitting president constitute conduct every

bit as corrosive to the integrity of sport as corruption or doping. Each violation would independently warrant a severe sanction; taken together, they should have led the UCI Ethics Commission to find that the Appellant is unfit to serve in cycling and should be permanently barred from holding such a position.

109. Moreover, contrary to the Appellant's argument, the breaches established in this case are not the product of inexperience or negligence. Instead, they are the result of deliberate, coordinated, and sustained acts of intimidation, retaliation, and self-dealing. The suggestion that they could be excused as managerial mistakes betrays a complete lack of accountability and understanding of the ethical responsibilities attached to leadership in sport. The fact that numerous individuals, including current and former officials and members of the federation, came forward within mere months of the Appellant's election speaks volumes about the extraordinary scale of the abuses committed under his leadership. Therefore, no mitigating circumstances exist. Instead, there are numerous aggravating factors, including the Appellant's continued denial of responsibility.
110. The Appellant's argument that the UCI Ethics Commission acted *ultra vires* is manifestly unfounded. Article 34.2 of the CoE expressly provides that the UCI Ethics Commission can impose "*a ban from taking part in any cycling-related activity organised by the UCI and its affiliates*". This is effectively what the UCI Ethics Commission has done in the Decision. The term "*cycling-related activity*" necessarily encompasses governance and administrative functions within national federations, which are affiliated to the UCI. The sanction does not go beyond what the CoE provides.
111. In its Answer, the Respondent requested the following relief:
 - "i. *The Appeal filed by Mr Gerganov and all of his prayers for relief are dismissed.*
 - ii. *The UCI Ethics Commission decision of 5 August 2025 in the matter UCI EC/2025/EBG is upheld.*
 - iii. *Mr Gerganov shall be order [sic] to pay a contribution towards the legal costs and other expenses incurred by the UCI in connection with these proceedings."*

V. JURISDICTION

112. Article R47 of the CAS Code provides as follows:

"An appeal against the decision of a federation, association or sports-related body may be filed with CAS if the statutes or regulations of the said body so provide or if the parties have concluded a specific arbitration agreement and if the Appellant has exhausted the legal remedies available to it prior to the appeal, in accordance with the statutes or regulations of that body. [...]" (emphasis added)

113. In turn, Article 35 (1) of the CoE provides that:

“Any decision of the Ethics Commission imposing a sanction, including provisional measures, or ordering compulsory measures in accordance with article 18, may be appealed before the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) by the parties to the proceedings. [...]” (emphasis added)

114. It follows from the highlighted parts of the above quotation that CAS has jurisdiction on appeals against decisions of the UCI Ethics Commission imposing a sanction, such as the Decision. Moreover, the Respondent has explicitly accepted CAS jurisdiction. Accordingly, the Panel finds that it has jurisdiction to adjudicate the present case.

VI. ADMISSIBILITY

115. Article R49 of the CAS Code provides as follows:

“In the absence of a time limit set in the statutes or regulations of the federation, association or sports-related body concerned, or in a previous agreement, the time limit for appeal shall be twenty-one days from the receipt of the decision appealed against. The Division President shall not initiate a procedure if the statement of appeal is, on its face, late and shall so notify the person who filed the document. When a procedure is initiated, a party may request the Division President or the President of the Panel, if a Panel has been already constituted, to terminate it if the statement of appeal is late. The Division President or the President of the Panel renders her/his decision after considering any submission made by the other parties. [...]”

116. Pursuant to Article 35 (2) of the CoE:

“The deadline to appeal, according the CAS Code of Sports-related Arbitration, starts to run upon notification of the decision with grounds [...]”

117. The Decision, with grounds, was notified to the Appellant on 5 August 2025. The Statement of Appeal was filed on 25 August 2025, i.e., within the deadline of 21 days as provided for in Article R49 of the CAS Code, and as explicitly referred to in Article 35(2) of the CoE. Therefore, the appeal was timely filed.
118. There is no indication in the file that the appeal may be inadmissible for any other reason. Indeed, the Respondent has expressly accepted that the appeal is admissible. On this basis, the Panel finds that the appeal is admissible.

VII. OTHER PROCEDURAL MATTERS

119. In his Appeal Brief, the Appellant requested that the Panel “*request from UCI all reports, evidence and other materials that were received during the investigation*”, arguing that in order to resolve the case objectively, the Panel “*needs to have all the information gathered during the UCI investigation*”. While Article R57(1) of the CAS Code permits the Panel to request communication of the file of the federation, the Panel decided not to make such request in this case because the Respondent has alleged, and the Appellant has not disputed, that the case file was transmitted to the Appellant prior

to the issuance of the Decision. The Appellant has not asserted that the file transmitted to him was incomplete. Accordingly, the Appellant had the opportunity to submit in this arbitration any elements of the case file that he deemed relevant. This being so, procedural economy militated against introducing into the record of this arbitration all documents gathered during the Respondent's investigation, regardless of their relevance to this case, and of whether they were specifically referred to by the Parties. For completeness, the Panel notes that the Appellant did not raise any objection at the hearing to the Panel not having made the desired request to the Respondent.

VIII. APPLICABLE LAW

120. Article R58 of the CAS Code provides as follows:

“The Panel shall decide the dispute according to the applicable regulations and, subsidiarily, to the rules of law chosen by the parties or, in the absence of such a choice, according to the law of the country in which the federation, association or sports-related body which has issued the challenged decision is domiciled or according to the rules of law that the Panel deems appropriate. In the latter case, the Panel shall give reasons for its decision”.

121. Article 77 of the UCI Constitution, in turn, reads as follows:

“In the absence of a choice of applicable law by the parties, the Court of Arbitration for Sport shall primarily apply the UCI Constitution and Regulations and, additionally, Swiss law.”

122. As there is an absence of choice of applicable law by the Parties here, it follows from Article R58 of the CAS Code and Article 77 of the UCI Constitution that the Panel shall primarily apply the UCI Constitution and Regulations, specifically the CoE and, additionally, Swiss law. In line with well-established CAS jurisprudence, the applicable editions of the relevant regulations are, as regards the merits of the matter, those in force at the time of the alleged misconduct (see, *ex multis*, CAS 2010/A/2209, para. 8). In the case of the CoE, this is the edition that entered into force on 4 August 2023 (which the Panel understands is still in force as of the writing of this Award).

IX. MERITS

123. Both Parties agree, as does the Panel, that the Respondent bears the burden of proving to the comfortable satisfaction of the Panel that the Appellant committed the violations of the CoE alleged by the Respondent. The burden of proof follows from Article 8 of the Swiss Civil Code, the standard of proof from Article 30.2 of the CoE. In accordance with well-established CAS jurisprudence, and as acknowledged by both Parties, the standard of comfortable satisfaction requires more than a mere balance of probabilities, but less than proof beyond reasonable doubt (see, e.g., CAS 2014/A/3625, para. 132 with further references). To reach comfortable satisfaction, the Panel should also take account of the gravity of the allegation made (*ibid.*).

124. Moreover, the Panel agrees with the Respondent that, pursuant to Article 30.2 of the CoE, there is no *numerus clausus* as to the types of evidence that the Panel may consider. Rather, according to that same provision, the Panel “*shall determine the admissibility, relevance, materiality and weight of evidence at its discretion*”.
125. By contrast, for the following three reasons, the Panel is not persuaded by the Respondent’s argument that the Panel should afford a certain margin of deference to the UCI Ethics Commission’s assessment of the evidence, particularly when assessing the credibility of witnesses.
126. First, in line with CAS jurisprudence, the Panel accepts the Respondent’s argument that even if the procedure before the UCI Ethics Commission had been flawed for the reasons invoked by the Appellant, such flaws would be cured in this CAS appeals procedure due to the fact that this Panel decides the case *de novo*, pursuant to Article R57(1) of the CAS Code (see, *ex multis*, CAS 94/129, para. 59; CAS 1920/A/2009, para. 87; see, however, also CAS 2010/A/2275, para. 38). However, it would be conceptually difficult to reconcile with this *de novo* nature of CAS appeal proceedings, and with the resulting ignorance to any flaws in the previous instance procedure, if the Panel were to pay deference to the previous instance body’s assessment of the evidence.
127. Secondly, as highlighted by the Swiss Federal Tribunal (decision of 17 January 2013, 4A_538/2012, para. 5.1), the free assessment of evidence is a pillar of international arbitration. It is therefore this Panel’s task to assess the evidence before it, rather than rely on another instance’s assessment of the evidence. This holds true, in particular, as the UCI Ethics Commission is a body of the Respondent. While the Panel sees no reason to doubt the impartiality and competence of the individual members of the UCI Ethics Commission who rendered the Decision, it would still be at odds with the role of this Panel as an independent arbitral tribunal if it were to defer to the evidentiary assessment conducted by a body of one of the parties to this arbitration.
128. Thirdly, the Panel notes that the UCI Ethics Commission did not conduct an oral hearing. Conversely, the Panel heard live testimony from at least some of the witnesses in this arbitration. Therefore, the Panel does not consider that the UCI Ethics Commission was somehow better placed than this Panel to assess the credibility of any of the witnesses (contrary to the scenario alluded to in CAS 2011/A/2518, para. 14, and later referred to in CAS 2012/A/2804, para. 9, and CAS 2012/A/2804, para. 48).
129. For the above reasons, the Panel does not find it appropriate to afford deference as such to the UCI Ethics Commission’s assessment of the evidence. As a side note, the Panel considers that its approach is also consistent with Article 30.2 of the CoE, pursuant to which it is for the Panel to determine the relevance, materiality and weight of the evidence at its own discretion.
130. As a further consequence of the *de novo* nature of CAS appeal proceedings, the Panel does not agree with the Appellant’s criticism at the hearing, namely that the written statement Ms Doycheva submitted in this arbitration did not form part of the case file before the UCI Ethics Commission. First, according to the Decision, the UCI Ethics

Commission did receive a statement from Ms Doycheva, and the references to that statement in the Decision suggest that it was the same statement that is now before this Panel. Second, the Panel would not be prevented from relying on that statement even if the same statement was not before the UCI Ethics Commission. While, under Article R57(3) of the CAS Code, the Panel has discretion to exclude new evidence that could reasonably have been discovered by the parties before the challenged decision was rendered, this provision is used very rarely in CAS proceedings precisely because CAS decides *de novo*. Various commentators have suggested that CAS panels should make use of their power to exclude evidence only where the previous instance was an independent arbitral tribunal, and the submission of the new evidence before CAS constitutes an evidently abusive behaviour by the relevant party (MAVROMATI/REEB, *The Code of the Court of Arbitration for Sport*, 2nd edition, 2025, Article R57 para. 45; RIGOZZI/HASLER, in: ARROYO (ed.), *Arbitration in Switzerland: The Practitioner's Guide*, 2nd ed., 2018, Article R57 para. 11). Under the circumstances of the present case, the Panel sees no reason to exclude Ms Doycheva's statement.

131. Finally, the Panel notes the Appellant's argument that the UCI Ethics Commission should not have relied on the witness statements of Mr Georgiev, Mr Kouzov, Ms Doycheva and Mr Tamahkyarov. According to the Appellant, it is very likely that their testimonies are false, or at least greatly exaggerated, because their complaints against the Appellant came almost immediately after his election as a member of the BCF Management Board, which is the same position that they sought to occupy. The Panel accepts that the witnesses' political ambitions need to be considered in the assessment of their testimonies. However, the Panel also notes that under the applicable Swiss law, in assessing witness testimony, the "*focus [...] is not on credibility as a personal characteristic, but rather on the credibility of the specific statement [...] as the concept of 'general credibility' is considered to be of little use in the psychology of testimony*" (Swiss Federal Tribunal, decision of 1 September 2020, 5A_550/2019, para. 9.1.3.1.). As will become clear below, the decisive statements made by these four witnesses have remained unchallenged in substance, and/or are corroborated by further evidence. In such circumstances, it is not sufficient for the Appellant to suggest that merely because these persons held political ambitions, it is likely that they have all been lying or at least distorting the facts. Neither is it sufficient to offer a blanket denial of all allegations at the end of the hearing.
132. With these evidentiary matters in mind, the Panel now turns to the question of whether the Respondent has established the violations of the CoE that it alleges (section A. below) before turning to the magnitude of the sanction to be imposed (section B. below).

A. Violations of the CoE

133. As a preliminary remark, the Panel notes that the Appellant has not disputed that, as a federation administrator, he was a so-called license-holder according to Article 1.1.010 of the UCI Cycling Regulations and, therefore, subject to the CoE pursuant to Article 1 of the CoE at all relevant times.

134. For the sake of consistency, in its analysis of the alleged violations of the CoE, the Panel will follow the categorization of the alleged violations set out in the Decision as well in the Parties' submissions. Accordingly, the Panel will deal in turn with the alleged violations under Articles 5.3 (section 1. below), 6.4 (section 2. below), 7.4 (section 3. below) and 8.1 of the CoE (section 4. below).

1. Article 5(3) of the CoE (abuse of position)

135. Article 5(3) of the CoE provides as follows:

“Persons bound by the Code may not abuse their position in any way, especially to take advantage of their position for private aims or gains.”

136. The Appellant contends that, as chairman of the BCF Management Board, he did not hold any special powers as compared to other members of the BCF Management Board. He further submits that due to the majority requirement for decisions of the BCF Management Board, he did not have the power to make any unilateral decisions. Should those arguments seek to dispute that the Appellant held a position of authority and influence within the BCF at all relevant times, they do not persuade the Panel. First, it follows from Article 28(1) of the BCF Statutes that the chairman of the BCF Management Board has powers that go beyond those of ordinary members, not least the power to direct the activities of the BCF Management Board. Second, the Panel finds it indisputable that even an ordinary member of the BCF Management Board holds a position of authority and influence within the BCF. The BCF Management Board is the highest executive body of the BCF, holding important powers such as implementing decisions of the BCF General Assembly, preparing a four-year strategy, managing BCF assets, approving regulations, and selecting the athletes and clubs authorized to represent the BCF internationally. The fact that the BCF Management Board acts by majority vote does not diminish the significant influence each of its seven members has, whether through voting or participation in the preceding discussions, and often in their own interests.
137. Accordingly, the only question which remains in the framework of Article 5(3) of the CoE is whether the Appellant abused his position in any way for his personal benefit. In the Panel's view, abuse in this context requires it to be established that the Appellant exploited his authority or influence with inappropriate means (e.g. coercion, intimidation, manipulation, harassment, discrimination) and/or for inappropriate ends (e.g. personal gains, suppression of opposition, reprisal, or similar aims disconnected from the objectives that the Appellant is meant to pursue through his position).
138. All violations of Article 5(3) found established in the Decision and maintained by the Respondent in its submissions to the Panel, are based on allegations of either (i) retaliation by the Appellant for criticism against him, his allies and/or their governance practices, or (ii) actions through which the Appellant exploited his position obtain personal benefits. The Panel does not hesitate to find that retaliatory acts, in particular those taken to silence criticism, are a prime and particularly serious example of an abuse of position. Similarly, using one's official position to reap personal benefits clearly

amounts to an abuse of that position. Consequently, the decisive question is whether the Respondent has met its burden of proving, to the Panel's comfortable satisfaction, that the Appellant has in fact exploited his position to retaliate against critics and derive personal benefits.

139. As a preliminary matter, the Panel considers that the allegations concerning the BCF's payment of the Appellant's own UCI fine are better addressed under Article 7.4 of the CoE. Accordingly, it will address here only the remaining allegations upheld in the Decision and maintained by the Respondent in this arbitration.

a. Attempt to sanction Mr Deliyskii

140. In the view of the Panel, the Respondent has discharged its burden of establishing that the Appellant called Mr Dobrev, then chair of the BCF Commissaire Commission, and tried to make him impose severe sanctions on Mr Deliyskii. This allegation is supported by the written testimony of Mr Dobrev, whom the Appellant has not sought to cross-examine. In fact, the Appellant has not even addressed this allegation in his submissions before this Panel, even though it had been found established in the Decision.
141. Further, it is undisputed that Mr Deliyskii acted as a President of the Commissaires' Panel at the Tour of Bulgaria and, as such, was responsible for the disqualification of a rider that the Appellant refused to accept. Nothing in the record indicates any other conduct by Mr Deliyskii that could have prompted the Appellant to ask Mr Dobrev to sanction him.
142. On this basis, the Panel is comfortably satisfied that the Appellant blamed Mr Deliyskii for the classification-changing time penalty that the Appellant refused to accept and attempted to retaliate against him by pressuring Mr Dobrev to impose a sanction on Mr Deliyskii. The Panel considers this to be an unequivocal violation of Article 5(3) of the CoE.

b. Influencing Ms Doycheva to withdraw support for Extraordinary BCF General Assembly

143. The Panel is comfortably satisfied that the Appellant offered to help Ms Doycheva's son make the national team if she withdrew her support for the petition seeking the extraordinary BCF General Assembly in which a vote of confidence would be held against the BCF Management Board. The existence and nature of the relevant phone call is corroborated by Ms Doycheva's detailed written testimony. The Appellant chose neither to cross examine Ms Doycheva nor to address this allegation in his submissions to this Panel, even if it had been found established in the Decision.
144. Even if one considered that seeking to gain Ms Doycheva's political support was a legitimate objective, the Panel holds that the Appellant pursued this aim with manifestly inappropriate means. The fact that the Appellant attempted to dissuade the manager of a BCF member club from supporting a vote of confidence against the BCF Management

Board amounts to an abuse of position. Far more incriminatory is that by offering to help her son be selected for the national team, the Appellant offered Ms Doycheva a *quid pro quo* for her political support. Needless to say, the selection of riders to national teams is a power of the BCF Management Board that should be made on the basis of sporting criteria. This power should not be exploited as a means for the chairman of the BCF Management Board to consolidate his power within the BCF. Accordingly, the Panel is comfortably satisfied that the Appellant committed another violation of Article 5(3) of the CoE in so doing.

c. Disciplinary sanctions against Mr Georgiev and Kurbel

145. Based on the totality of the evidence, the Panel is comfortably satisfied Mr Georgiev and his club Kurbel were sanctioned predominantly, if not exclusively, to silence him as a critic of both the BCF's leadership and the Appellant. This finding is supported by a combination of four factors.
146. First, the timing of the sanctions gives rise to suspicions as to its motivations. The relevant meeting of the BCF Management Board was convened on 29 January 2025, i.e. within days the application was filed with the Sofia City Court seeking to force the convening of an extraordinary BCF General Assembly at which BCF leadership would face a vote of confidence. It is undisputed that Mr Georgiev, through the Kurbel club, was the main driver behind this initiative. Had the reason for the sanctions really been inappropriate messages sent by Mr Georgiev, as claimed by the Appellant and as purported by the official minutes, one wonders why no disciplinary proceedings were ever instigated in respect of any of those instances of allegedly inappropriate behaviour, only to suddenly impose a lifetime ban on 5 February 2025.
147. Second, the Panel is comfortably satisfied the sanction was imposed in disregard of principles of procedural fairness. On this, the Respondent submits on the one hand that Mr Georgiev and his club were afforded no procedural rights and sanctioned without due process. The Appellant asserts on the other hand that Mr Georgiev was invited to provide an explanation for his behaviour during the BCF Management Board meeting. Yet, the Panel finds that the only evidence of this 'invitation' is an undated letter, signed by the Appellant, in which the BCF Management Board granted Mr Georgiev a deadline of one day to provide written explanations. However, it is unclear whether this letter was actually sent and, critically, the letter is void of any suggestion of an invitation to the meeting. Additionally, a deadline of only one day to provide written submissions in one's defence is grossly inappropriate, in particular in the context of a lifetime ban. Considering the above-mentioned chronology, regardless of whether the letter was sent, it appears trite to state that the Appellant's intention appears to have been to get rid of Mr Georgiev and his club as soon as possible after he had filed the application to the Sofia City Court.
148. Third, the sanctions imposed are, by any reasonable standard, disproportionate and excessive. Even if Mr Georgiev had sent inappropriate messages, and even if such behaviour might have justified discipline against him personally, it is clear that this alleged misbehaviour could not justify, be it with or without a previous escalation of

sanctions, a lifetime ban against Mr Georgiev and an expulsion of Kurbel. The Appellant has not denied that Mr Angelov was merely sanctioned with a fine of 300 BGN for having been found guilty of telling a minor to “*get a shovel and dig his own grave*”. Accordingly, even by the BCF’s own standards, it was grossly excessive to impose a lifetime ban and an expulsion for sending inappropriate messages. The grossly excessive nature of the sanction is another indicator that the sanctions imposed were not in fact meant to discipline Mr Georgiev and Kurbel for inappropriate messages but rather served to get rid of him and his club as retribution for their legal action which sought to replace BCF leadership.

149. Fourth, while certainly not sufficient in itself to substantiate the true intentions behind the disproportionate sanctions imposed, the Panel finds it striking that in an agenda encompassing 21 items, the sanctions against Mr Georgiev and Kurbel are listed directly after the agenda item on the application filed to the Sofia City Court. Accordingly, at the meeting itself, the BCF Management Board first decided against convening an extraordinary BCF General Assembly, which decision was incompatible with Bulgarian law pursuant to the subsequent decision of the Sofia City Court, and then promptly proceeded to permanently remove the initiator of the request, and his club, from the BCF. This further emphasises the notion of an underlying connection between the two items which was to thwart (albeit unsuccessfully) an extraordinary BCF General Assembly at which the BCF Management Board members risked being replaced.
150. The Panel is also comfortably satisfied that the Appellant played an instrumental role in imposing what amount to retaliatory sanctions. It is undisputed, and in fact confirmed by the minutes of the 5 February 2025 meeting of the BCF Management Board, that not only did the Appellant vote in favour of the ban against Mr Georgiev as well as of the expulsion of Kurbel, but it was also he who proposed (jointly with two others) the imposition of a lifetime ban against Mr Georgiev. The Panel is not persuaded by the Appellant’s argument that the BCF General Assembly imposed the sanctions. As the minutes of the relevant BCF General Assembly and (in relation to the expulsion of Kurbel) Article 46(7) of the BCF Statutes both demonstrate, the BCF General Assembly merely dismissed an appeal against the sanctions that had already been imposed by the BCF Management Board. It is noteworthy that the Appellant’s argument is inconsistent on this point because he rightly submits that it is the BCF Management Board and not the BCF General Assembly who is empowered to expel a member pursuant to Article 46(2) of the BCF Statutes. Hence, the Appellant cannot credibly denounce responsibility for the sanctions imposed on Mr Georgiev and Kurbel.
151. Finally, even if one could give the Appellant the benefit of doubt and assume that Mr Georgiev’s criticism of the Appellant was actionable due to its content and/or tone, be it under the BCF regulatory framework or domestic legislation, this would not justify the course of action taken – i.e. grossly excessive sanctions imposed without due process – or result in the dissipation of the retaliatory element successfully established by the Respondent. Consequently, the Panel finds that the Appellant’s role in the imposition of the retaliatory sanctions imposed against Mr Georgiev and Kurbel

amounts to another, and particularly egregious, instance of abuse of power within the meaning of Article 5(3) of the CoE.

d. Disciplinary sanction against Ms Petrova

152. Based on the evidence, the Panel is comfortably satisfied that the disciplinary sanction imposed on Ms Petrova served predominantly, if not exclusively, the purpose of retaliating against her, in particular for having filed a complaint to the BCF Disciplinary Committee against Mr Kolev for alleged verbal abuse. Five factors support this finding.
153. First, according to the official minutes of the relevant BCF Management Board meeting held on 3 January 2025, it was the Appellant who advocated for a resolution to replace with a mere warning the fine imposed by the BCF Disciplinary Board on Mr Kolev, arguing that the fine was “*not constructive and create[d] unnecessary tension*”. The Appellant clearly was dissatisfied that a fine had been imposed on his former coach, Mr Kolev, as a result of Ms Petrova’s complaint.
154. Second, the official minutes of the BCF Management Board Meeting of 5 February 2025 sets out allegations underlying the sanction imposed on Ms Petrova. However, in her written testimony, Ms Petrova averred that the allegations were unfounded. She also submitted a letter from Mr Borislav Ivanov, the member of the BCF Management Board who voted against the sanction, according to whom the allegations were not supported by the evidence. The Appellant does not specifically address in this arbitration whether the accusations against Ms Petrova were accurate. He neither sought to cross-examine Ms Petrova nor adduced any evidence that she had acted wrongfully. At a minimum, therefore, it is doubtful that there was any legitimate basis for sanctions against her, still less a sanction of such severity.
155. Third, the Panel is comfortably satisfied that the sanctions were imposed without due process. Ms Petrova testified in writing that she was not heard and the Appellant did not argue otherwise. He also did not seek to cross-examine her. The Panel finds no indication in the record that Ms Petrova was in fact heard prior to the imposition of the sanction.
156. Fourth, the sanction was imposed on Ms Petrova on 5 February 2025, merely one month after the Appellant had successfully advocated for the BCF Management Board to overturn the fines imposed by the BCF Disciplinary Board. There is also no indication in the file that the BCF Management Board met between 3 January and 5 February 2025. Indeed, the minutes of those meetings refer to “*meeting of the Management Board No. 073*” and “*No. 074*”, respectively, suggesting that Mr Petrova was sanctioned at the very next meeting after the fine against Mr Kolev was overturned. Although not conclusive on its own, this chronology reinforces the impression of a link between the Appellant’s dissatisfaction with the fine imposed on Mr Kolev and the sanction imposed on Ms Petrova.
157. Fifth, sanctions were also imposed on Mr Georgiev, Kurbel, and Mr Dobrev at the same BCF Management Board meeting at which Ms Petrova was sanctioned. Each had previously acted in a manner opposed by the Appellant: supporting the petition for an

extraordinary BCF General Assembly and vote of confidence against the BCF Management Board, resisting his pressure to sanction Mr Deliyskii, or initiating disciplinary proceedings against his former coach. The simultaneous disciplinary measures may of course have been coincidental; so too may have been the fact that they followed immediately after the petition for an extraordinary BCF General Assembly gave the Appellant a reason to consolidate his power, as also reflected in his attempt to influence Ms Doycheva. More likely, however, having regard to the totality of evidence, the Panel considers that the simultaneous sanctioning of all four individuals indicates that the sanction against Ms Petrova formed part of a broader pattern of retaliation against dissenters.

158. Taking those five factors together, the Panel is comfortably satisfied that the sanction imposed on Ms Petrova was not a genuine disciplinary measure but rather amounted to reprisal for her having initiated proceedings against Mr Kolev. Further, the Appellant does not dispute that he was the one who proposed the sanction, and that he subsequently voted for it as the official minutes of the BCF Management Board Meeting of 5 February 2025 confirm. Accordingly, the Panel finds that the Respondent has discharged its burden of proving a further instance of abuse of power by the Appellant in violation of Article 5(3) of the CoE.

e. Disciplinary sanction against Mr Dobrev and removal of Mr Kouzov

159. Turning to the sanction imposed by the BCF Management Board on Mr Dobrev and its proposal to remove Mr Kouzov from the BCF Management Board, the Panel finds the evidence of retaliatory action not to be as conclusive.
160. On the one hand, as mentioned above, it is striking that four persons who had opposed the Appellant were all either sanctioned, or proposed for removal from the BCF Management Board, at the very same BCF Management Board meeting, right after an application was filed to the Sofia City Court to force an extraordinary BCF General Assembly that could cost the Appellant his position as chairman of the BCF Management Board. In addition, all those persons had filed reports to the UCI against the Appellant or, in the case of Mr Kouzov, mentioned that the Appellant did not notice violations of the BCF Statutes committed by Mr Angelov. The mere coincidence of these measures is highly suspicious. The Panel also notes that the Appellant has not sought to establish that Mr Dobrev committed the wrongdoings that allegedly formed the basis of the sanction against him, according to the official minutes of the 5 February 2025 meeting, or that Mr Kouzov missed three meetings of the BCF Management Board within a 12-month period. Under these circumstances, these decisions by the BCF Management Board offer the impression that the members voting in favour of the disciplinary sanction against Mr Dobrev and the removal of Mr Kouzov, including the Appellant, sought to suppress opposition and criticism in an attempt to consolidate their power.
161. On the other hand, it is not obvious that the Appellant had a sufficient motive to retaliate against Mr Dobrev and Mr Kouzov. First, at the time the decision was taken, the Appellant had not yet been notified by the UCI of any investigation against him.

Instead, he was notified twenty days later, on 25 February 2025. Hence, he could not yet have known about the report filed by Mr Dobrev against him, or the information provided by Mr Kouzov to the UCI Ethics Commission. Second, there is no suggestion that Mr Dobrev or Mr Kouzev were involved in the application to the Sofia City Court. Third, while the Respondent refers to Mr Kouzov as a “*dissenting member*”, it does not elaborate on the factual basis (pre-dating 5 February 2025) for this description. Notably, there is no indication that, on 5 February 2025, it was already known that Mr Kouzov would stand for election at the (not yet scheduled) extraordinary BCF General Assembly on 25 May 2025. Fourth, the Respondent argues that Mr Dobrev had already been retaliated against previously by having his access to the BCF Commissaires Commission email account blocked subsequent to a General Meeting of the BFC Commissaires that had been convened on a day which, as the organizers of the meeting allegedly knew, he was unavailable because he was attending an official UCI training course. However, the Respondent does not explain what role, if any, the Appellant played in this regard. Accordingly, the motive for retaliation against Mr Kouzov at the time remains unclear, and the only reason for reprisal against Mr Dobrev that transpires from the Respondent’s submissions and is supported by evidence is Mr Dobrev’s refusal to sanction Mr Deliyskii. This incident, however, occurred almost five months prior to the BCF Management Board meeting of 5 February 2025. Therefore, the chronology is less suggestive of retaliation than it is for Mr Georgiev, Kurbel and Ms Petrova.

162. Moreover, compared with the sanctions imposed on Mr Georgiev, Kurbel and Ms Petrova, it is less clear whether at the measures adopted against Mr Dobrev and Mr Kouzov had legitimate, rather than retaliatory, grounds. In respect of Mr Kouzov, while it is true that his absence from the meeting of 5 February 2025 was excused, the Respondent does not specifically contest, or submit a statement by Mr Kouzov in which he contests, that Mr Kouzov had been absent for more than three previous meetings within 12 months. In case of such absence, the requirements for removal under the BCF Statutes would have been met. Similarly, Mr Dobrev’s written testimony includes a statement whereby “*most of the accusations are completely unfaithful, incorrect and even lies*” (emphasis added). This seems to suggest that other accusations may have been accurate. In addition, as rightly noted by the Appellant, the suspension of Mr Dobrev’s license was also voted for by Mr Borislav Ivanov. There is no suggestion that Mr Ivanov, who voted e.g. against the sanction imposed on Ms Petrova, was an ally of the Appellant. Further, the Panel notes that the sanction imposed on Mr Dobrev was significantly less severe than those imposed on Mr Georgiev and Kurbel. For these reasons, the Panel cannot readily conclude that the sanction lacked any substantive basis.
163. In light of the factors set out above, the Panel considers that it is not necessary for it to make a definitive finding as to whether the Appellant retaliated against Mr Dobrev and Mr Kouzov. This is because it is comfortably satisfied, as explained above and below, that the Appellant has violated Article 5(3) of the CoE at least in respect of Mr Georgiev, Kurbel, Ms Petrova and Mr Tamahkyarov. Further, as explained below, the Panel considers that the sanction imposed is proportionate even if no violation of Article 5(3) of the CoE was committed in respect of Mr Dobrev and Mr Kouzov.

f. Dissolution of Disciplinary Panel and disciplinary sanction against Mr Tamahkyarov

164. The Panel is further comfortably satisfied that the Appellant retaliated against Mr Tamahkyarov by supporting a disciplinary sanction against him for an alleged failure to timely file a race report.
165. Similar to the sanctions imposed against Mr Georgiev and Kurbel, the timing of the sanction is highly suspicious. Mr Tamahkyarov's alleged failure to submit the report occurred at the beginning of November 2024, but the sanction was imposed only at the end of May 2025, after the Appellant had already received Mr Tamahkyarov's complaints to the UCI Ethics Commission. The undisputed fact that the sanction was based on a complaint filed by a board member of the club of Mr Angelov, who likewise supported the sanction, adds to the suspicion.
166. Moreover, Mr Tamahkyarov testified at the hearing that he did file the report within 24 hours of the race (which would have been timely). This testimony, which corroborated prior written testimony and was not challenged in cross-examination, is supported by a screenshot from Mr Tamahkyarov's computer showing in the "*Date modified*" column of the relevant document the date of the day after the race. While this does not prove that he sent it on that date, it does offer some contemporaneous support to his testimony because the more likely course of things was for him to have sent the document as soon as it was prepared, rather than months later, as asserted by the Appellant. Furthermore, it is undisputed, and confirmed by a screenshot of the relevant email, that Mr Dobrev, who had been the chair of the BCF Commissaire Commission at the relevant time, informed the BCF Disciplinary Panel in March 2025 that he had already confirmed to the BCF Control Board on 17 January 2025 that he had received Mr Tamahkyarov's report. The Appellant has not disputed that Mr Dobrev did inform the BCF Control Board on 17 January 2025 that he had received Mr Tamahkyarov's report. This, however, was two months before the date on which, according to the Appellant, the BCF had allegedly received Mr Tamahkyarov's report for the first time. There is no indication that the BCF Management Board even considered this confirmation by Mr Dobrev, which directly contradicts Mr Hadzhiev's complaint, before imposing a sanction on Mr Tamahkyarov. This casts additional doubt on the legitimacy of the purpose pursued by this sanction.
167. Finally, it remains undisputed that Mr Tamahkyarov was not afforded the right to be heard prior to the imposition of the sanction. Considering all these factors together, alongside the proven retaliation against Mr Georgiev, Kurbel and Ms Petrova in a previous meeting of the BCF Management Board, the Panel finds that the sanction against Mr Tamahkyarov, which the Appellant supported, likewise amounted to retaliation, in this case for Mr Tamahkyarov's complaints to the UCI Ethics Commission. The Panel considers this to be another established violation of Article 5(3) of the CoE. This being so, the Panel does not find it necessary to make any ruling on whether the dissolution of the BCF Disciplinary Commission, of which Mr Tamahkyarov was a member, amounted to a further retaliatory act against him.

2. Article 6.4 of the CoE (psychological abuse)

168. Article 6.4 of the CoE, styled “*Protection of physical and mental integrity*”, provides as follows:

“The persons bound by the Code shall respect the integrity of all persons with whom they interact in the context of their cycling-related activity. The personal rights of every individual whom they contact and who are affected by their actions shall be protected and respected.

The above shall be considered as the general rule and is supplemented by Appendix 1.”

169. Appendix 1 to the CoE (“Appendix 1”) reads as follows in its relevant parts:

“Art. 1 Purpose of the present Appendix

[...]

The present Appendix supplements art. 6.4 of the Code and provides clear guidance regarding acts and omissions which are not permitted in relation to harassment and abuse as well as obligations related thereto, whether in the context of a person’s cycling-related activities or not.

[...]

Art. 2 Forbidden Conduct

Art. 2.1 Psychological abuse

Any unwelcome act including confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, infantilisation, or any other treatment which has the effect of diminishing the sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth.

Art. 3.1 Obligation to report

All persons bound by the Code of Ethics shall have the obligation to report any action that may reasonably be considered as a violation of article 2 of the present Appendix. “
(emphasis original)

170. There can be no doubt that pursuant Articles 2.1 and 3.1 of Appendix 1, which are incorporated by reference into Article 6.4 of the CoE, acts of humiliation, intimidation and verbal assault, among others, as well as a failure to report a *prima facie* violation of the CoE may give rise to a violation of Article 6.4 of the CoE. With this in mind, the Panel turns to the specific allegations of breach of Article 6.4 of the CoE.
171. The Appellant has not disputed that, during the 2024 Tour of Bulgaria, he was warned by the competent Commissaires about the positioning of his vehicle in the peloton, in reaction to which warning he cursed the Commissaires and told them he could fire them at any time. This course of events is also confirmed by the written testimony of Mr Georgiev, which part of the testimony the Appellant did not challenge during cross-examination. Thus, the Panel is comfortably satisfied that the Appellant verbally

assaulted and intimidated the Commissaires in violation of Article 6.4 of the CoE. The Panel is not persuaded by the Appellants *ne bis in idem* argument because there is no indication that the Respondent has already been sanctioned for the same misconduct. Instead, it remains undisputed, and is confirmed by the contemporaneous letter with which the Respondent opened the relevant disciplinary proceedings against the Appellant, that the fine UCI imposed on the Appellant related to his conducting the podium ceremony in disregard of the official results.

172. In addition, the Panel finds that the Appellant's attempt to make Mr Dobrev sanction Mr Deliyskii amounted not only to an abuse of power, but also to attempted intimidation of Mr Deliyskii. According to Article 3 of the CoE, a mere attempt likewise qualifies as a breach of the CoE, in this case of Article 6.4 of the CoE. The Appellant's reference to the principle of *ne bis in idem* is again unavailing because there is no indication that he was ever sanctioned for the same misconduct.
173. Further, it remains undisputed, and was confirmed by Mr Georgiev's written testimony, which was unchallenged in cross-examination, that the Appellant mocked Mr Kouzov in front of the 11 December 2024 BCF General Assembly, thereby humiliating him in front of a large group of BCF members. The Panel finds that this constitutes a violation of Article 6.4 of the CoE.
174. It likewise remains undisputed that, during the same BCF General Assembly, the then-national team coach, Mr Gabrovski, continuously insulted Mr Kouzov and others, without any action being taken to bring the insults to an end. Indeed, this is confirmed by multiple written witness statements. Article 3.1 of Appendix 1 to the CoE requires all persons bound by the CoE to report any action that may reasonably be considered as a violation of Article 2 of the same Appendix. The Panel has no doubt that the insults made by Mr Gabrovski, as described in further detail in the witness statements, amounted to verbal assault and humiliation and, as such, violated Article 2.1 of Appendix 1. Accordingly, the Appellant, being bound by the CoE, was under an obligation to report that behaviour, which he undisputedly did not do. The Panel is not persuaded by the Appellants argument that, as chairman of the BCF Management Board, he did not hold any special powers in the BCF General Assembly. Even if this were true from a formal perspective, it is trite that the chairman of the highest executive body of a sports federation enjoys a special position of authority and influence within the federation. Moreover, Article 3.1 of Appendix 1 does not require that the Appellant had any special powers. While it may well be that other persons bound to the CoE violated Article 3.1 of Appendix 1 as well, this does not shield the Appellant from responsibility for his failure to report, which the Panel finds amounts to a separate violation of Article 6.4 of the CoE.
175. Moreover, the Respondent has established that in trying to convince Ms Doycheva to withdraw her support for the petition seeking an extraordinary BCF General Assembly, the Appellant offered to help her son get onto the national team in exchange for such withdrawal (see para. 143 above). The Panel finds that this implied a threat that, if she did not withdraw, the Appellant would not support the selection of her son to the national team. In addition, the Appellant's offer put significant emotional pressure on

Ms Doycheva to decide between what she had set out to do in the BCF political arena, i.e., seek a vote of confidence against the then leadership, and an opportunity to support her son's sporting career. The Panel considers that such pressure is irreconcilable with the protection of mental integrity, as explicitly protected by Article 6.4 of the CoE. Accordingly, the Panel finds a further violation of Article 6.4 of the CoE.

176. Finally, having ruled above that the Appellant retaliated against Mr Georgiev, Kurbel, Ms Petrova and Mr Tamahkyarov, the Panel finds that the same act also qualifies as intimidation and, therefore, constitutes a violation of Article 6.4 of the CoE. This is further aggravated by Mr Tamahkyarov's written testimony that he received warnings and threats from the Appellant (and others) discouraging him from taking any action against the Appellant or his allies. Said written testimony was not challenged in cross-examination at the hearing. Moreover, the Panel notes that Mr Tamahkyarov asked the UCI Ethics Commission not to forward his complaint to the Appellant, fearing adverse consequences for his son, an active rider. In view of the threats he had previously received, this fear seems credible. Accordingly, the Panel accepts Mr Tamahkyarov's mental integrity, as explicitly protected by Article 6.4 of the CoE, was negatively affected by the Appellant's retaliation against him. This being so, the Panel does not find it necessary to decide whether the dissolution of the BCF Disciplinary Committee amounted to a further instance of intimidation against Mr Tamahkyarov.
177. Accordingly, the Panel concludes that the Appellant committed multiple violations of Article 6.4 of the CoE, read in conjunction with Articles 2.1 and 3.1 of Appendix 1.

3. Article 7.4 of the CoE (conflict of interest)

178. Article 7.4 of the CoE, styled "*Conflicts of interest*", provides as follows, in its relevant part:

"Persons bound by the Code shall avoid any situation that could lead to a conflict of interest by taking appropriate measures such as abstaining from taking part, directly or indirectly, in a decision or an agreement and/or disclosing potential interests that are susceptible of influencing the decision-making of the person concerned. A conflict of interest shall arise when the objectivity of a person bound by the Code, in expressing an opinion, undertaking any action or taking part in a decision, may be influenced or be perceived as being influenced due to private or personal interests. Private or personal interests include gaining any possible advantage for the persons bound by the Code, their family, relatives, friends and acquaintances. [...]"

179. Accordingly, Article 7.4 requires any person bound by the CoE to avoid any situations in which their objectivity may be (perceived as being) influenced by private or personal interests, be it by abstaining from taking part in the relevant situation, making a disclosure, and/or taking other appropriate measures.

a. Appellant's vote on the BCF's payment of his personal fine

180. The Appellant does not dispute, and the official minutes of the BCF Management Board Meeting of 18 October 2024 confirm, that he voted in favour of the BCF paying the

fine that had been imposed on him personally by the UCI. The Panel finds that this is not only a violation of Article 21(1) of the BCF Statutes, which provides that members of the BCF Management Board shall not have a right to vote when the matter voted upon concerns themselves, but also a violation of Article 7.4 of the CoE. Indeed, the latter provision expressly foresees that an appropriate measure to avoid a conflict of interest is “*abstaining from taking part [...] in a decision*”.

181. In any event, even assuming that it would have been permissible for the Appellant to participate in the vote on the BCF’s payment of his own personal fine, it would have been incumbent on him to ensure that it was abundantly clear to all involved that he would be voting for the BCF to pay for his own fine. However, the official minutes of the relevant meeting reflect that even though the proposal voted on was for the BCF to pay all fines imposed by the UCI in relation to the 2024 Tour of Bulgaria, “*general and personal*”, there is no indication that the Appellant’s fine was discussed before the vote was conducted. The entire discussion preceding the vote exclusively concerned the fines imposed on the BCF and whether the persons ultimately responsible for them should be made to pay those fines (see para. 10). Therefore, only an express disclosure by the Appellant might have prevented a violation of Article 7.4 of the CoE. Yet, the Appellant does not even claim that he made any disclosure. Accordingly, the Panel is comfortably satisfied that the Appellant violated Article 7.4 of the CoE.
182. For the avoidance of doubt, the Panel notes that that the Respondent’s Head of Finance, Mr Luc Bordel, informed the Appellant that for the UCI to issue an invoice to the BCF for the Appellant’s personal fine, he would need to submit proof that the BCF accepted to pay such fine is immaterial to establish that a violation of Article 7.4 occurred. Although the Appellant relies on that communication, he does not argue that it authorized him to participate in the vote by which the BCF decided to pay his personal fine without disclosing his inherent conflict of interest. Such an argument would be moot.

b. Failure to disclose relationship with Ms Khachadurian

183. It remains undisputed that when Ms Khachadurian was the BCF Disciplinary Commission’s chairwoman, she was also the Appellant’s personal lawyer and cooperated with him in the same political party. This was also confirmed by the written testimony of Ms Petrova, whom the Appellant did not seek to cross-examine. Accordingly, the Panel is comfortably satisfied that the Appellant and Ms Khachadurian maintained personal and professional ties outside the BCF.
184. It seems obvious to the Panel that such ties could, at the very least, create the appearance of a conflict of interest in various situations. For instance, per Article 39(7) of the BCF Statutes, the BCF Management Board has the power to remove the members of the BCF Disciplinary Commission. The BCF Management Board chairman’s view as to whether he should seek a removal of the chairperson of the BCF Disciplinary Commission may at least appear to be influenced by a personal and business relationship between these two officials. Similarly, the chairperson of the BCF Disciplinary Commission has the right to participate in meetings of the BCF Management Board “*with a consultative*

voice”, pursuant to Article 39(4) of the BCF Statutes. The way in which this consultative role is exercised may in turn be influenced, or at least reasonably be perceived as being influenced, by a personal and business relationship with the chairman of the BCF Management Board. In addition, Article 39(3) of the BCF Statutes prevents persons sitting on BCF governing bodies from being appointed as BCF Disciplinary Commission members. As the BCF Management Board is one of those governing bodies, according to Article 12(1)(b) of the BCF Statutes, it follows that the BCF Statutes intend a certain independence of the BCF Disciplinary Commission from the BCF Management Board. This independence might obviously be (seen to be) affected if the chairperson of the BCF Disciplinary Commission has a personal and business relationship with the chairperson of the BCF Management Board.

185. The Panel is not persuaded by the Appellant’s argument that his relationship with Ms Khachadurian cannot give rise to any conflict of interest because the BCF Disciplinary Commission, chaired by Ms Khachadurian, sanctioned Mr Kolev and Mr Lumparov, who are alleged to be close to the Appellant. Contrary to that premise, a conflict of interest may exist even where the decision-making process was not actually affected. Indeed, this is reflected in the wording of Article 7.4 of the CoE, whereby a conflict of interest denotes a situation in which a person’s objectivity “*may be influenced*” (emphasis added). In any event, Article 7.4 of the CoE explicitly prohibits not only actual conflicts of interest but also perceived conflicts of interest (“*may [...] be perceived as being influenced*”). Accordingly, the Panel finds that the relationship between the Appellant and Ms Khachadurian gave rise to (at least) a perceived conflict of interest.
186. Following the same logic, the Panel is also not convinced by the Appellant’s argument that any conflict of interest is disproven by the fact that the BCF Management Board resolved to dissolve the BCF Disciplinary Panel, which had been chaired by Ms Khachadurian. This is particularly so because, contrary to the Appellant’s suggestion, the dissolution did not entail Ms Khachadurian’s removal: it is undisputed that she had already offered her resignation from the BCF Disciplinary Panel before it was dissolved. This is confirmed by the official minutes of the relevant meeting of the BCF Management Board, whereby the Appellant “*proposed a vote to accept [Ms Khachadurian’s] resignation and dissolve the Disciplinary Committee*”.
187. Accordingly, the Appellant was required at least to disclose his relationship with Ms Khachadurian. There is no indication that he ever did so, and that omission constitutes a further violation of Article 7.4 of the CoE.

B. Sanction

188. The Appellant challenges the sanction imposed on him on two grounds: First, he argues that there is no (sufficiently clear) legal basis in the CoE for the sanction imposed, in particular the ban from holding any position within the BCF. Second, he submits that the sanction is excessive. The Panel will deal with each of those points in turn below.

1. Existence of a sufficiently clear legal basis

189. The Panel fully subscribes to the well-established CAS jurisprudence whereby, for a sports governing body to be able to impose disciplinary sanctions, it must have enacted, prior to the alleged wrongdoing, a sufficiently clear legal basis (see, e.g., CAS 94/129, para. 34; CAS 2007/A/1392, para. 30; CAS 2009/A/1823, para. 9.5; CAS 2011/A/2612, para. 103 with further references). Article 34.2 of the CoE, which is invoked in the Decision, and by the Respondent in this arbitration, as the legal basis for the sanctions imposed on the Appellant, provides as follows, in its relevant parts:

“In relation to breaches of the Code, the Ethics Commission may impose the following sanctions:

[...]

- fine up to a maximum of CHF 1'000'000;

[...]

- ban from taking part in any cycling-related activity organised by the UCI and its affiliates.”

190. The Appellant does not specifically contest that the imposition of a fine of CHF 10,000 against him lacks a sufficiently clear legal basis. Indeed, this part of the sanction is plainly covered by the first bullet-point reproduced above.
191. What remains to be determined is whether the ban imposed on the Appellant finds sufficient support in the last bullet-point reproduced above. In this regard, the Appellant argues that the provision fails to give any guidance as to both the minimum and maximum duration of the ban as well as its scope.
192. Starting with the former point, it is true that Article 34.2 of the CoE does not provide for any minimum or maximum duration of the ban. However, the Panel does not find that this renders this legal basis insufficiently clear. Instead, it is clear from the very absence of any minimum or maximum that a ban may range between zero and lifetime. A comparison with the bullet-point dealing with fines confirms that, if the legislator sought to introduce an upper limit, it knew how to do so. Whether or not an extensive ban is legal is a question of proportionality, not of whether Article 23.2 of the CoE provides a sufficiently clear legal basis for such a sanction.
193. Turning to the second point, Article 34.2 of the CoE indeed does not elaborate on the scope of the ban that may be imposed. In particular, Article 34.2 of the CoE does not include the wording chosen in the Decision, i.e. that the ban prevents the Appellant from:

“holding any position as administrator, board member, director, staff member, committee member, or other elected or appointed role within the administration of the BCF or the UCI or any of its other members or affiliates, and from organising or holding any position as an official, event organiser, or other role related to the

organisation of any event in relation to any cycling events or cycling-related activities, whether organised by the UCI, its members, affiliates, or any other entity.”

194. However, the Panel notes that the term “*any cycling-related activity*” used in Article 34.2 of the CoE is broad, given the use of the terms “*any*” and “*related*”. There is no indication that this provision was intended to be limited to prohibiting a participation in races. To the contrary, Article 1 of the CoE provides that the CoE applies not only to cyclists, coaches or other persons usually directly involved in races, but also (amongst others) to so-called license holders, which term includes federation administrators pursuant to Article 1.1.010 of the UCI Cycling Regulations. In view of this personal scope of application of the CoE, it would not be reasonable to interpret the term “*any cycling-related activity*” narrowly so as to catch only activities that are directly connected to races. Instead, the Panel finds that, based on a systematic and teleological interpretation of Article 34.2 of the CoE, it is sufficiently clear that a ban imposed based on that provision may also apply to administrative functions within national federations.
195. This interpretation is further supported by the fact that Article 34.2 of the CoE itself refers explicitly to cycling-related activities “*organised by the UCI and its affiliates*” (emphasis added). This makes clear that the ban need not be limited to positions within the UCI. There can be no doubt that the term “*affiliates*” encompasses national federations, which are direct members of the UCI (see Article 5 of the UCI Constitution) and themselves bound to the CoE, per Article 1 of the CoE.
196. Accordingly, the Panel rejects the Appellants’ argument that Article 34.2 of the CoE provides no clear legal basis for banning him from administrative functions within the BCF.

2. Proportionality

197. The Panel notes that, according to well-established CAS jurisprudence, the proportionality of any disciplinary sanction shall be reviewed with self-restraint and amended only when the sanction is “*evidently and grossly disproportionate*” (see, *ex multis*, CAS 2009/A/1870, para. 125; CAS 2011/A/2645, para. 44; CAS 2015/A/3874, para. 202). That said, the Panel is also aware of other CAS awards suggesting that CAS panels may amend any sanction they find to be disproportionate, even if not evidently and grossly so (see, e.g., CAS 2017/A/5003, para. 274). Be that as it may, the Panel does not find it necessary to take any view in this regard because the outcome of the Panel’s analysis would be the same under both approaches.
198. The Panel has determined that the Appellant has committed multiple violations of Article 5(3) of the CoE by abusing his power to retaliate against critics and seek personal benefits, has repeatedly violated Article 6.4 of the CoE by engaging in psychological abuse, and has committed two separate violations of Article 7.4 of the CoE by failing to avoid (at least perceived) conflicts of interest. The Panel finds that, taken together, those violations are very serious. The chairman of a national member federation’s highest executive body is expected to be a role model and to act in accordance with good governance principles. The Appellant’s conduct consistently fell

short of this expectation. To wit, repeated abuses of power, psychological abuses and conflicts of interest are the antipode of good governance.

199. The Panel is not persuaded by the Appellant's argument that his violations were mere mistakes that reflected his lack of experience in managerial roles. As correctly noted by the Respondent, the violations committed by the Appellant cannot be explained, or justified, by a lack of experience. They are serious breaches of some of the most fundamental tenets of good governance, which any senior official in a national sports federation can be expected to be aware of, and to respect. In addition, the Appellant did not commit one isolated violation that could be explained by an exceptional lapse of judgment. Instead, the violations were committed systematically in numerous instances, to the detriment of multiple persons, and over a span of several months.
200. Consequently, the Panel finds that a severe disciplinary sanction is warranted. Against this background, the Panel considers that a fine of CHF 10,000 and a ban from all cycling-related activities for two years is not disproportionate to the offences committed (or grossly and evidently disproportionate). Instead, the Panel finds this sanction to be particularly lenient. This holds true even if one accepts the Appellant's contribution to the sport of cycling as a mitigating circumstance.
201. In particular, the Panel is not persuaded by the Appellant's reference to a case in which the ban imposed on a football administrator was reduced by CAS from five years to 15 months (CAS 2017/A/5086). That case was decided on the basis of different regulations, it involved misconduct of a different nature and gravity (the accused was mainly found guilty of having written an unethical letter in support of his country's bid for the FIFA World Cup, which letter however was found not to amount to bribery) and the panel in that case found mitigating circumstances that are not to be found in this case.
202. Finally, the Panel is unable to follow the Appellant's argument that the Decision artificially increased the sanction by finding multiple violations in the same conduct. Contrary to the Appellant's view, it does not violate the principle of *ne bis in idem* that one and the same action was, e.g., found to be a violation of both Article 5(3) and 7(4). *Ne bis in idem* applies to a situation in which the same wrongdoing cannot be sanctioned twice. This is not the case here. Instead, some of the Appellant's actions violated more than one provision of the CoE. It is permissible to find that conduct is reprehensible where the same act simultaneously violates multiple provisions of the CoE. Accordingly, even disregarding the fact that some of the Appellant's conduct satisfied the elements of more than one CoE offence, the Panel finds that the sanction imposed by the UCI Ethics Commission is proportionate, given the number and seriousness of the offences committed by the Appellant.

X. COSTS

(...)

ON THESE GROUNDS

The Court of Arbitration for Sport rules that:

1. The appeal filed by Mr Evgeniy Balev Gerganov on 25 August 2025 against the Decision rendered by the UCI Ethics Commission on 5 August 2025 is rejected.
2. The Decision rendered by the UCI Ethics Commission on 5 August 2025 in the matter is confirmed.
3. (...).
4. (...).
5. All other motions or prayers for relief are dismissed.

Seat of arbitration: Lausanne, Switzerland

Date: 28 August 2026

THE COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT

Dr Heiner Kahlert
President of the Panel

Prof. Phillipe Sands KC
Arbitrator

Ms Janie Soublière
Arbitrator