



Management Report

Operation Urraca

10 November 2025

Introduction

Operation Urraca performed a review into alleged breaches of the World Anti-Doping Code and departures from the International Standards (IS), allegedly committed by the management of the Spanish Commission for the Fight Against Doping in Sports (CELAD).

Background

In December 2023, Spanish media company *Relevo*¹ published articles alleging that CELAD failed to sanction athletes who tested positive and that WADA has allowed this to happen. After meeting with *Relevo* journalists and obtaining their documentation, Operation Urraca was formed on 15 January 2024. Additional documentation was subsequently obtained from other sources.

Methodology

After an initial review of the hundreds of pages of documents in Spanish, obtained in January 2024, Operation Urraca obtained and reviewed, between May 2024 and July 2025, an extensive number of additional documents from CELAD and Professional Worldwide Controls (PWC), including documents dating back to 2018. They also provided written responses to a wide array of questions to clarify aspects of this documentation.

Throughout the review, subject matter expertise was needed. Consequently, a dedicated task force was established with specific points of contact from WADA's departments of Legal/Results Management, Science & Medicine and Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships². Additionally,

several data and information requests were made to Digital Insights/Data & Insights.

Interviews were conducted with seven current and three former CELAD employees, and one PWC employee, both in person and virtually.³

The review focused on allegations about CELAD's management of its anti-doping program.

Allegations

Based on the information provided by the sources, approximately 15 allegations were categorized into four main themes.

One: Unsanctioned Doping Cases

CELAD has intervened in and manipulated the results management process of 38 doping cases through the granting of retroactive Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs) and the misuse of an internal checklist of irregularities, to protect high-level athletes; and WADA has allowed this to happen.

Two: Independence of the Spanish TUE Committee (TUEC)

The Spanish TUEC has not properly carried out assessments of TUE applications. Rather, decisions to approve or reject a TUE have been made solely by the Head of CELAD's Testing Department. Additionally, a member of the TUEC is in a position of conflict of interest.

Three: Unaccredited and Improperly Accredited Doping Control Officers

CELAD carried out testing missions with individuals who are either unaccredited or

¹ *Relevo* permanently ceased operations at the end of May 2025.

² This department was recently separated in two: "Engagement and Development" and "Government relations".

³ One CELAD employee, several from PWC, and all DCOs declined voluntary interview requests.

improperly accredited as Doping Control Officers (DCOs).

Four: Improper Results Management of Unsuccessful Testing Attempts

Sixty-two unsuccessful attempts, relating to 49 athletes, have not been properly recorded and/or sanctioned by CELAD.

Review & Findings

Allegation One

CELAD has intervened in and manipulated the results management process of 38 doping cases⁴ through the granting of retroactive TUEs and the misuse of an internal checklist of irregularities (“the checklist”) to protect high-level athletes; and WADA has allowed this to happen.

Notably, the former head of testing at CELAD⁵ would have granted retroactive TUEs for some cases, without fulfilling the retroactivity criteria set by the ISTUE. Moreover, there was arbitrariness when granting TUEs: TUEs with similar circumstances would have resulted in different outcomes.

The checklist was used to detect if there were any irregularities that could prevent CELAD from notifying the athlete of their adverse

analytical findings (AAF).⁶ The purpose of the checklist was to prevent CELAD from wasting resources on pursuing AAFs with a critical irregularity which would almost certainly nullify the sample and result in the sanction being overturned. The checklist allegedly provided them with several options for nullifying an AAF, by giving them the possibility to choose which irregularity would be used and when to nullify an AAF.

According to the sources, this was done to protect the reputation of Spain, by avoiding charging high-level athletes with Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs).

Findings

Results Management of 38 Doping Cases⁷

Twenty-seven AAF Cases

- Twelve cases resulted in an ADRV decision, including two cases from 2019 whose results management was delayed until November 2023, allegedly due to perceived⁸ non-conformities with the former Spanish Royal Decree 641/2009.⁹
- Twelve cases resulted in a “no case to answer” decision: eight retroactive TUEs, one prospective TUE, two authorized administration routes and one ungrounded decision¹⁰.

⁴ Thirty-eight cases: 27 adverse analytical findings (AAFs), two atypical findings (ATFs), one tampering or attempted tampering case and eight adverse passport findings (APFs).

⁵ With the approval of the former director of CELAD.

⁶ The checklist, used by the Testing Department, included, among other points, whether the athlete had a TUE, if there was a signed chain of custody form and if there were two DCOs present during sample collection.

⁷ This section only presents the outcome of CELAD’s results management. For cases appealed further, the final outcome may differ.

⁸ Operation Urraca was made aware that the Legal Affairs Department wrongly believed that there were non-

conformities. The copies of the chain of custody did not exhibit signatures, and they were unaware of the existence of signed originals.

⁹ The plausibility of this allegation to justify the delay to open results management proceedings in the two cases was not assessed as it would require a deep understanding of Spanish regulations. However, it is worth noting that *prevarication* of public servants (ie issuing an unjust decision or sentence knowingly) is a penal offence under the Spanish Penal Code, art 446. Therefore, when irregularities are detected, it would not be possible to sanction the athlete.

¹⁰ Operation Urraca found CELAD’s decision to close this case (from 2018) on grounds that the facts could not be proven, unjustified, since a prior B-sample analysis

- One case from 2019 with a retroactive TUE is pending decision.
- Two cases were managed by other results management authorities (RMAs).¹¹

2 Atypical Finding (ATF) Cases and One Alleged Attempted Tampering (Code art. 2.5)

The three cases did not constitute an ADRV.¹²

Eight Adverse Passport Findings (APF) Cases

- Two cases from 2020 were sanctioned in 2024.
- One case had a concomitant AAF case already sanctioned with the maximum suspension duration.
- Three cases were transferred to other RMAs to avoid issues with the recognition of the athlete biological passport (ABP) as sufficient doping evidence in Spain. However, due to technical issues, the athletes have not yet been notified,¹³ and WADA's Legal Department continues to monitor these.
- Two cases were not APF cases.¹⁴

Alleged Manipulations of the Results Management Process

Eight of the nine TUEs that were granted to cover nine AAFs from this review were approved and recorded in the Anti-Doping Administration Management System (ADAMS) by the TUEC and were also inspected or thoroughly assessed by the WADA TUE team, who raised no concerns. The ninth TUE, a prospective TUE, was granted several years before the AAF occurred, and the approval was

had already confirmed the AAF. However, WADA's deadline to appeal expired before this review began.

¹¹ One case resulted in an ADRV; one case resulted in a "no case to answer" for retroactive TUE.

¹² The ATFs and alleged attempted tampering were investigated but did not result in ADRVs.

recorded in ADAMS by the former head of testing, as per standard practice back in 2015.

Regarding the misuse of the checklist and the irregularities in the sample collection process, only two cases were identified based on their results management delay due to non-conformities with the former Spanish Royal Decree 641/2009. However, both cases had been duly transferred from CELAD's Testing Department to their Legal Affairs Department,¹⁵ which evidenced that the former head of testing did not interfere in the process. Furthermore, these two cases had been flagged as "late" by WADA as part of the 2019 audit.

Operation Urraca found no evidence that CELAD, and specifically its former head of Testing Department, intervened in and manipulated the results management process of the 38 reviewed cases to cover up AAFs. The review showed that these TUEs were granted several years before the AAF and/or properly reviewed and approved by the Spanish TUE Committee, in addition to having been inspected or thoroughly assessed by the WADA TUE team. Furthermore, no evidence of arbitrariness when granting TUEs was found.

Athlete Biological Passport Recognition

The five APF cases for which there was a delay in the results management process, highlight an issue related to the lack of recognition of the ABP as sufficient evidence of doping in Spain ("Ibai Salas" jurisprudence by the Spanish Administrative Court for Sport (TAD)).

¹³ To WADA's knowledge, as of 27 May 2025.

¹⁴ These were not related to results management of anti-doping cases, but rather to patrimonial liability claims.

¹⁵ At Operation Urraca's request, CELAD provided screenshots showing that scans of the two case files were uploaded to the Legal Affairs Department's file system in September 2019.

These five cases had already been flagged by WADA and were being monitored by WADA's Legal Department when the allegations were reported. Therefore, Operation Urraca did not review these cases further.

Confidential Information Published by the Spanish Media

Operation Urraca can reasonably conclude that, not only did the Spanish media obtain confidential information, including medical data, but they also published erroneous conclusions due to a lack of understanding of the technicalities of WADA's requirements.

Allegation one is not substantiated.

Allegation Two

The Spanish TUEC has functioned as a "straw" committee, failing to properly assess TUE applications. Decisions on whether to approve or reject a TUE have been made solely by the former head of testing. Moreover, a related person ("the Related person") would hold the position of head of the TUE division at CELAD.

Additionally, a senior member of the TUEC would be in a position of conflict of interest due to simultaneously holding a leadership role within the health committee of a national sport federation.

Findings

The Spanish TUEC Activity

CELAD's process for the review of TUE applications changed on 31 March 2016,¹⁶ when it began to be carried out directly in ADAMS. Operation Urraca's review discovered that, since then, each TUE review has always

involved the participation of at least one TUEC member and that three or more TUEC members have been actively involved in the review of 75% of the TUEs. The TUEC has therefore duly performed the TUE application assessments.

Alleged Involvement of the Former Head of Testing and of the Related person

Prior to 31 March 2016, the former head of testing was responsible for recording the TUEC's decisions in ADAMS at the end of the process. Since then, their role has been to offer administrative support for the TUEC, while the TUE approvals have been recorded by the TUEC president. This is standard practice.

The Related person is responsible for overseeing the ABP Unit at CELAD¹⁷ and has TUE-related access rights in ADAMS, which do not include the rights to approve TUEs. Due to their position, they are expected to consult TUE information when necessary.¹⁸

Operation Urraca found no evidence of their alleged involvement in TUE approvals.

Alleged Conflict of Interest of TUEC Member

Operation Urraca confirmed that the member in question has properly fulfilled their conflict-of-interest obligation by disclosing their affiliation with a national sport federation and, between 2017 and 2024, has abstained on several occasions from taking position on related TUE applications.

Allegation two is not substantiated.

¹⁶ Before, reviews were conducted outside ADAMS, with the final decision recorded in ADAMS only at the end.

¹⁷ They are not the head of the TUE Division, as alleged.

¹⁸ WADA ABP team explained that the role of anti-doping organisation (ADO) staff responsible for the ABP is to

follow up on passports for which the ADO is the custodian. It is therefore expected that they consult TUE information when necessary.

Allegation Three

The sources alleged that CELAD has carried out testing missions with unaccredited or improperly accredited DCOs since 2021. Specifically, in 2022, three DCOs were reportedly accredited based on fake testing mission attendance certificates provided by their service provider and Sample Collection Authority (SCA), PWC.¹⁹ And a fourth DCO, lacking proper accreditation, would have carried out a testing mission at the Paris Olympic Games in 2024.

In addition to the names provided by the sources, Operation Urraca identified 35 additional DCOs from the documentation provided²⁰ and verified their accreditation status for the relevant periods.

Additionally, allegations raised that CELAD executives misused public funds by paying PWC for irregular testing missions, where only one DCO was sent, instead of two.²¹ This was investigated by the Madrid Provincial Court, which dismissed the case in October 2024.²²

Testing missions conducted by a single accredited DCO comply with the International Standard for Testing and Investigations (ISTI) requirements. Therefore, allegations regarding the absence of a second DCO were not reviewed as part of Operation Urraca.

Findings

The Three Improperly Accredited DCOs

Operation Urraca established that CELAD already investigated the issue in 2022.²³

Following two meetings held in December 2022 between representatives from CELAD and PWC, it was agreed by both parties that CELAD would revoke the accreditations of the three DCOs and would not pay PWC for the controls carried out by these DCOs.

Based on Operation Urraca interviews with representatives from CELAD and PWC, there is no evidence to indicate that PWC's certificates were intentionally falsified; rather, it seems to have been an error or an oversight.²⁴

The Paris Olympic Games DCO

Regarding the fourth DCO lacking proper accreditation, despite having been a DCO previously, Operation Urraca determined that this individual participated in the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, in the capacity of the Spanish Olympic team doctor, rather than as a DCO.

The Additional 35 DCOs

Among the 35 DCOs whose accreditations²⁵ were reviewed for the specified dates in the documents received, 30 DCOs were properly accredited and five raised the following issues:

Gaps Between Accreditations

Five DCOs conducted testing missions²⁶ during periods when they were not accredited by CELAD. While all held valid accreditations before and after the testing missions in question, these took place during a lapse in

¹⁹ These certificates came from PWC Madrid office.

²⁰ Such as DCFs, testing missions, and CELAD internal reports and audits, provided by the sources.

²¹ Which did not meet the requirements set by the former Spanish Royal Decree 641/2009.

²² News article from El Confidencial: "*Ineptitud y cobardía*", published on 23 October 2024.

²³ The issue was identified during an internal review carried out by several CELAD employees.

²⁴ Unfortunately, the PWC Madrid employee who signed the certificates declined to be interviewed, limiting Operation Urraca's ability to obtain further clarification.

²⁵ In some cases, accreditation certificates were missing; but CELAD provided internal system screenshots showing the recorded dates of the missing accreditations.

²⁶ These missions were carried out in 2019 and 2021.

their accreditation. Two of the five DCOs were accredited by PWC at the time, which complies with the Code and ISTI. However, the other three were not accredited by either CELAD or PWC during these gaps.

These three DCO cases were not further reviewed by Operation Urraca as they were outside the specific scope of the allegations.

Doping Control Agents (DCAs)

In the Spanish Royal Decree 641/2009, there is a distinction between DCO and DCA. Regardless of this difference, both must be trained and accredited by CELAD.²⁷

During the review of the documentation received, Operation Urraca identified three individuals who participated in testing missions in 2019 and, although they were accompanied by an accredited DCO, the three individuals signed the doping control forms (DCFs) as DCA/2nd DCO when they were not accredited.²⁸ While the presence of an accredited DCO means there is no breach of the ISTI, unaccredited individuals should not sign as DCA/2nd DCO. This is procedurally incorrect; it misrepresents their role and undermines the integrity of the accreditation.

As the original allegations had been addressed and a properly accredited DCO attended these missions, Operation Urraca did not pursue further verification of the matter.

Allegation three is unsubstantiated. However, gaps between accreditations and the status of the DCA/2nd DCO require further review and closer monitoring by CELAD.

Allegation Four

Sixty-two unsuccessful attempts, relating to 49 athletes, were not properly recorded and/or sanctioned by CELAD.

Findings

Sixty-two Unsuccessful Attempts Allegedly not Recorded and/or Sanctioned by CELAD

Out of the 62 unsuccessful attempts, 52²⁹ had an appropriate results management outcome, with 37 missed tests duly recorded and 15 unsuccessful attempts duly not recorded as missed tests.

However, 10 unsuccessful attempts from 2018, 2022 and 2023 had inadequate results management:

Five unsuccessful attempts involved three athletes who provided explanations lacking sufficient evidence to rule out negligence.³⁰ CELAD accepted their explanations when further evidence should have been requested.

One unsuccessful attempt was not notified when it should have been. A prior missed test had been notified, but no decision had been made, leading CELAD to erroneously believe they could not notify the subsequent unsuccessful attempt.³¹

Four unsuccessful attempts had no trace of results management. In three cases, CELAD acknowledged that these were mistakenly not notified. In the fourth case, an unsuccessful attempt report was initially believed to exist,³² but CELAD could not locate it.

²⁷ Ref: Royal Decree 641/2009, art 51, 52 and 53.

²⁸ By neither CELAD nor PWC. It is also important to emphasise that they did not sign as “Chaperone” or “Witness”, which is a separate category in the DCFs.

²⁹ Relating to 43 athletes.

³⁰ As required by ISRM art B.2.4(e)

³¹ Erroneous application of ISRM art B.2.3

³² Based on information received from the sources.

Unsuccessful Attempts Resulting or Potentially Resulting in ADRVs

For 46 athletes, the unsuccessful attempts under review were not part of a series of three whereabouts failures in a 12-month period. Therefore, they did not result in any ADRV.³³

Appropriate results management of unsuccessful attempts from 2018 and 2022 could potentially have led to ADRVs for two athletes included in the review³⁴ (one ADRV each). For a third athlete, the results management of the ADRV was delayed for one year, without justification.

Operation Urraca found no evidence that CELAD intervened in the results management process of 62 unsuccessful attempts to prevent sanctioning the athletes. Nevertheless, the review underlined CELAD's inadequate results management of 10 unsuccessful attempts.³⁵

Allegation four is unsubstantiated.

Conclusion

The four allegations are found to be unsubstantiated. However, although most of the cases reviewed had been properly handled, Operation Urraca's review identified issues in the results management of four AAFs, five APFs and 10 unsuccessful attempts (allegations one and four). The review also underlined CELAD's inadequate handling of its DCOs' status and gaps between accreditations (allegation three).

In addition to the findings above, Operation Urraca's review revealed the following significant aspects that warrant attention:

- It is reasonable to conclude that the sources lacked the knowledge and subject matter expertise to fully comprehend the validity of their allegations.
- The review identified that the former Royal Decree 641/2009 included additional requirements that did not comply with the Code and International Standards, resulting in several discrepancies. Many of the issues reviewed resulted from this misalignment. With the adoption of the current Royal Decree 792/2023, these issues have been addressed. However, other discrepancies between the Spanish law and the Code and International Standards endure to date. These discrepancies have been listed and shared with the compliance team.
- The Spanish TAD does not recognize ABP as sufficient proof of doping, resulting in delays in the results management of APF cases and in systematic annulations of related sanctions in Spain.

Operation Urraca has concluded that the overall allegation of systemic manipulation of procedures to cover-up doping cases and protect elite athletes is unfounded and incorrect, largely due to a misunderstanding of the technical aspects of WADA's requirements.

In closing, Operation Urraca shared and discussed recommendations internally, with the relevant WADA Departments. In addition, WADA I&I Management met with CELAD's Director and General Secretary on 31 October 2025 to share Operation Urraca's findings and recommendations. While CELAD has already acted on their own initiative to implement some

³³ There is an ADRV only when an athlete has committed three whereabouts failures (ie any combination of three missed test(s) or unsuccessful attempt(s)) within a 12-month period.

³⁴ It is unclear if a decision of ADRV should have been made in these two cases, as the two athletes were not

given the opportunity to provide explanations or evidence.

³⁵ Legal is monitoring the matter and tries to improve the level of knowledge of ADOs at the moment.

recommendations, the remaining ones were accepted and will be implemented in the coming weeks.



Natalia Chaparro

Investigator, Investigations Unit
Intelligence and Investigations Department



Mélanie Eudes

Analyst, Investigations Unit
Intelligence and Investigations Department



Mathieu Holz

Head of Investigations Unit
Intelligence and Investigations Department



Gunter Younger

Director
Intelligence and Investigations Department
World Anti-Doping Agency

Approved 10 November 2025