



Bellinzona, 15th April 2025

Press Release

2025 Edition of Galà dei Castelli Cancelled

With deep regret, the Organizing Committee of the Galà dei Castelli announces that the 2025 edition, scheduled for Tuesday, July 8, will not take place.

This difficult and unavoidable decision stems from a changed economic context caused by a recent intervention by the cantonal tax authority, whose impact has made it impossible to organize the event within the available timeframe.

Following the outcome of a tax audit, the newly outlined and objective tax burdens foreseen for the future, and, above all, the extreme proximity to the scheduled date of the meeting, the organizers were forced to cancel what would have been the 15th edition of an event that, over the years, has become a point of international reference, ranking 23rd among the world's best meetings in 2024.

In this difficult and painful moment, even before reflecting on the developments that led to this outcome, the Committee wishes to express its deepest gratitude to the City of Bellinzona, the sponsors, the media, the athletes, the volunteers, and all those who, with dedication and passion, helped the Galà dei Castelli grow into one of the sporting excellences of Italian-speaking Switzerland and the entire Confederation.

The Tax Issue

Identifying a single cause for such a serious decision is not easy. However, two critical elements appear decisive.

The first concerns the application of tax rates that are not competitive compared to those in other cantons or countries, particularly for similar events within the Diamond League and the European Athletics Silver circuit (see attached table). This discrepancy strongly influences the decisions of foreign athletes, who take tax treatment into account when evaluating participation. Already in 2014, the Committee had initiated a dialogue with the tax authority to obtain a flat-rate regime similar to that once applied to the "Gran Premio dei Castelli," with an 18% rate deemed competitive. However, the request was not accepted, and to this day, the Galà dei Castelli applies an 18% withholding on the actual amounts paid to foreign athletes for appearance fees and prize money. The tax is then calculated according to the official Canton Ticino tax table, with the Galà dei Castelli covering the difference between the withheld amount and the actual tax due.

The second issue concerns the definition of the taxable base. Until now, the Galà dei Castelli has always considered only monetary compensation—appearance fees and prize money—as taxable. However, the tax authority has now deemed additional items taxable, specifically the reimbursement of travel expenses and the costs borne by the organization for accommodation, meals, and local transportation. These are benefits not directly received in cash by the athletes.

All practices adopted so far have always been consistent, to the best of our knowledge, with the approach followed by the vast majority of other meetings in Switzerland and have continued in good faith even after the 2014 meeting with the authorities. This has also been recently confirmed by the relevant tax office officials.

This leads to paradoxical effects: an athlete with a CHF 500.00 appearance fee could face a tax rate of up to 54%.

A perverse outcome is that the organizer withholds 18% from the athlete's fee and bears the entire tax liability calculated according to the cantonal tables, thus covering the difference. Consequently, the organizer ends up paying taxes even on the portion of the tax they covered on the athlete's behalf, creating a paradoxical effect of being taxed on the tax itself.

Two Necessary Reflections

The first, political in nature, raises questions about the actual will—so often proclaimed—to ensure tax competitiveness among cantons. In the case of the Galà, this competitiveness has been lost, compromising the viability of a prestigious sports event with a significant economic impact on the region, amounting to over CHF 440,000. In this regard, we attach an overview of the economic impact generated by the 2024 edition.

The second reflection is more pragmatic: under the current conditions, the Galà dei Castelli can no longer compete with other national and international events. As a result—and with great sorrow—the event must be suspended, depriving Ticino of a place on the world stage of sport, harming not only Swiss athletics but also the region's overall image.

Ending with Dignity

The Galà dei Castelli thus raises the white flag for this edition. It does so with a sense of responsibility, honoring all existing commitments to athletes and sponsors, and with deep respect for the decisions of the authorities, despite the frustration and dismay this situation has caused among those who, for over fifteen years, have passionately contributed to building a shared sporting dream.

To those who today lament this painful outcome, we extend our heartfelt thanks. We nonetheless believe that the circumstances leading to this unavoidable decision require deep reflection, in the hope of bringing world-class athletics back to Ticino in the future.

The Galà dei Castelli Organizing Committee

1. Comparison of withholding tax rates on daily income:

Canton	% up to CHF 200.00	% from CHF 200.00 to CHF 1'000.00	% from CHF 1'001.00 to CHF 3'000.00	% from CHF 3'001.00
Zurich	10.8%	12.4%	15%	17%
Bern	10.8%	12.4%	15%	17%
Luzern	10%	12%	15%	20%
Ticino	15%	20%	25%	30%

2. Economic Impact of the Galà dei Castelli 2024 in Ticino

Type of Cost	Amount (CHF)
Accommodation, meals, transportation	135'000.00
Catering, events, representation expenses	91'500.00
Technical services, infrastructure, security, miscellaneous costs	63'800.00
Administrative costs and rentals	17'000.00
Advertising, communication, and billposting	57'500.00
Taxes	80'000.00
Totale	444'800.00