

Good governance in International Non-Governmental Sport Organisations: an empirical study on accountability, participation and executive body members in Sport Governing Bodies

Working paper for Action for Good Governance in International Sports Organisations (AGGIS) project

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This paper uses empirical data on structural issues relating to the quality of the self-governance of 35 Sport Governing Bodies. Firstly, this paper presents empirical evidence on the lack of accountability arrangements in SGBs. In particular, the watchdog function of their member organisations is severely undermined by the general absence of objective criteria and transparency in the distribution of funding to members. With regard to checks and balances, arguably the most topical issue is the total lack of independent ethics committees, if any, and their inability to conduct *ex officio* investigations. Secondly, our survey demonstrates that most SGBs have institutionalised athlete participation. However, in the overwhelming majority of the organisations, they have not been granted formal decision making power. Thirdly, with regard to executive body members, there is the rather anachronistic dominance of the European continent and also the preponderance of male officials. In addition, the general lack of term limits poses serious threats with regard to the concentration of power, which is evidenced for instance by the overall number of years SGB presidents are in office. The presented empirical evidence clearly supports the recent calls for good governance in sport. SGBs need to agree upon a set of well-defined criteria of good governance and take action towards compliance with those. Only then, the self-governance of sport will be credible and justifiable.

Introduction: the issue of good governance in International Non-Governmental Sports Organisations

In the last two decades, a significant body of governance literature has emerged. This has led to some considerable theoretical and conceptual confusion and therefore, “governance” is often used very loosely to refer to rather different conceptual meanings. Van Kersbergen and van Waarden (2004), for example, distinguish no less than nine different meanings regarding “governance”, which may lead to the conclusion that the term simply has “too many meanings to be useful” (Rhodes, 1997, p. 653). Definitions on governance depend largely on the respective research agendas of scholars or on the phenomenon that is being studied. Perhaps the best way to find a useful clarification on the concept within the context of this paper is by distinguishing it from, at least at first sight, similar concepts. For instance, Kooiman (1993) differentiates governance from governing,

defining the first as those societal activities which make a “purposeful effort to guide, steer, control, or manage (sectors or facets of) societies” (p. 2). Governance, on the other hand, is mainly concerned with describing “the patterns that emerge from the governing activities of social, political and administrative actors” (p. 3). Another commonly described distinction is that between governance and government: while government usually refers to the formal and institutional top-down processes which mostly operate at the nation state level (Stoker, 1998), governance is widely regarded as “a more encompassing phenomenon” (Rosenau, 1992, p.4). Indeed, in addition to state authorities, governance also subsumes informal, non-governmental mechanisms and thus allows non-state actors to be brought into the analysis of societal steering (Rosenau 1992, p. 4, Lemos and Agrawal, 2006, p. 298).

The governance debate has been increasingly prescriptive, hence the current global quest for so-called “good governance”. In the national realm, we witnessed the passing of absolute and exclusive sovereignty, as with the end of the cold war, it became politically more correct to question the quality of a country’s political and economic governance system in international fora (Weiss, 2000, pp. 796-806). Thus, what has been described as a “chorus of voices” has been urging governments “to heed higher standards of democratic representation, accountability and transparency” (Woods, 1999, p. 39). In the corporate world, good governance is usually referred to as “corporate governance” or “good corporate governance”, which relates to the various ways in which private or public held companies are governed in ways which are accountable to their internal and external stakeholders (OECD, 2004, p. 11; Jordan 2008, p. 24). Its origins derive from the early stages of capital investment and it regained prominence out of scepticism that product market competition alone can solve the problems of corporate failures (Shleifer and Vishny, 1997, p. 738).

International institutions have issued a checklist of factors that, in their experience, are useful indicators of good governance for both the private and the public sphere at national and international level (e.g. UNDP 1997, European Commission, 2001; OECD, 2004; WB, 2005; IMF, 2007). Such checklists serve as a yardstick for good governance and are oriented towards core features of governance structures and processes that are especially to be found in OECD countries (Hyden, Court and Mease, 2004). They comprise factors that include key principles such as accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, predictability, sound financial management, fighting corruption and transparency. In addition, when they refer to the political area, they may also include participation and democratisation, since a democratic environment is seen as a key background variable for good governance (e.g. Santiso, 2001).

Only recently, the call for good governance has finally reached the traditionally closed sporting world (e.g. Sugden and Tomlinson 1998; Katwala, 2000; IOC, 2008; Pieth, 2011; Council of Europe, 2012; European Commission, 2012). That this happened much more slowly in sport than in other sectors has to do with the fact that the world of sport is traditionally regulated in all its aspects through a self-governing network with its own rules and regulations. For almost a century, the sporting network was able to exercise its self-governance without any significant interference from states or other actors (Geeraert *et al.* 2012).

However, in recent years, the quality of the self-governance of International Non-Governmental Sport Organisations (INGSOs)²²⁴ has been increasingly questioned due to the commercialisation of sport, which painfully exposed governance failures such as corruption and bribery, but also made sport subject to the more avaricious and predatory ways of global capitalism (Andreff, 2000; 2008; Sugden, 2002; Henry and Lee, 2004). The importance of good governance in INGSOs cannot be underestimated. Analogous with the business world, economic sustainability ensures that INGSOs can achieve their long-term objectives as it ensures that they continue to operate in the long run (Bonollo De Zwart and Gilligan, 2009). Complying with good governance is also a means for making sure that an INGSO is capable to steer its sport in an increasingly complex sporting world (Geeraert *et al.* 2012). Moreover, in addition to enhancing public health through physical activity, sport has the potential to convey values, contribute to integration, and economic and social cohesion, and to provide recreation (European Commission, 2007). It has been argued that those important sociocultural values of sport are seriously undermined by corruption (Schenk, 2011, p. 1). Also, as sports commercialised significantly, particularly during the last two decades, the socioeconomic impacts on the wider society of rules devised and issued by sports bodies have increased accordingly (Katwala 2000, p. 3). This evolution, which mirrors the growing influence from international non-governmental organisations on what once had been almost exclusively matters of state policy (Weiss, 2000, p. 800), also has as a consequence that the lack of good governance in INGSOs has the potential to have substantial negative repercussions on the wider society. Finally, since INGSOs are charged with taking care of a public good, it is paramount that they take care of their sports in a responsible and transparent manner (Katwala, 2000, p. 3; Henry and Lee, 2004).

Notwithstanding the current internal and external efforts, the impression is that there still is inertia towards the achievement of better governance in the sports world (Katwala 2000, p. 2-5; Play the Game, 2011). That can partly be attributed to the fact that, with regard to good governance in sports, there are important knowledge gaps, situated at two levels. First, there is no generally accepted good governance code for international sports organisations. Good governance principles must always take account of the specificity of the relevant organisation (Edwards and Clough, 2005, p. 25). Therefore, codes from other sectors cannot be applied blindly to sports, since INGSOs are in fact a very peculiar kind of organisations. In their capacity as regulators/promoters of their sports, they in fact comprise elements of state, market and civil society actors, and this poses serious questions with regard to which elements from good governance checklists can and should be applied to the sports world. Moreover, there are many different structures to be discerned within INGSOs (Forster and Pope, 2004, pp. 83-100), which only adds to the complexity of the issue. Hence, a set of core and homogeneous principles is still missing, despite efforts by a multitude of actors at different levels. Second, there is a clear lack of substantive empirical evidence of the internal workings of INGSOs (Forster and Pope, 2004, p. 102). High profile scandals related to corruption teach us that there probably is

224 In this article, we use the term International Non-Governmental Sport Organisation (INGSO) as an umbrella term for all types of international sport organisations chiefly because it relates to the terms International Governmental Organisation (IGO) and International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO), which have a long tradition in the field of Politics and Political Science.

something wrong. But those are merely symptoms; the real question is: how bad is the disease?

In this paper, we treat three issues which the literature defines as particularly problematic with regard to the governance of INGSOs. These are accountability and participation issues (e.g. Forster and Pope, 2004, pp. 102-106; Houlihan, 2004, pp. 421-422; Thibault, Kihl and Babiak, 2010; Pieth, 2011; Geeraert *et al.*, 2012; Pielke, 2013), and the (perceived) conservatism and inertia in the people that govern INGSOs (Tomlinson 2000, Henry and Lee, 2004, p. 31). Often, a broad evidence base is lacking in academic literature as most of the time, the empirical focus is on one or only a few –usually larger– organisations (e.g. Sugden and Tomlinson, 1998; Schenk, 2011; Chappelet, 2012) or a series of local sports organisations (e.g. Taylor and O’Sullivan, 2009), but never on a broad range of INGSOs. The authors of this article try to present empirical evidence in order to define if the situation is as problematic as the literature and different pressure groups often make out. They try to identify certain governance aspects that particularly deserve quality improvements.

Methodology

This study is premised upon a set of ontological and epistemological assumptions closely related to the critical realist social theory (e.g. Bhaskar, 1975, 1978, 1989, 1998). This approach reconciles the interpretivists view that “actors produce a structure” with the realist stance that “rules, norms and operating procedures, together with sometimes unobservable structures can determine decision-making” (Marsh and Furlong, 2002, p. 37). As such, the critical realist stance on social science can be briefly summarised as follows: structures provide the context within which agents act and, as such, constrain or facilitate actions. However, it is agents who interpret that structure, and, in acting, change the structure (Marsh, 2008, p. 253).

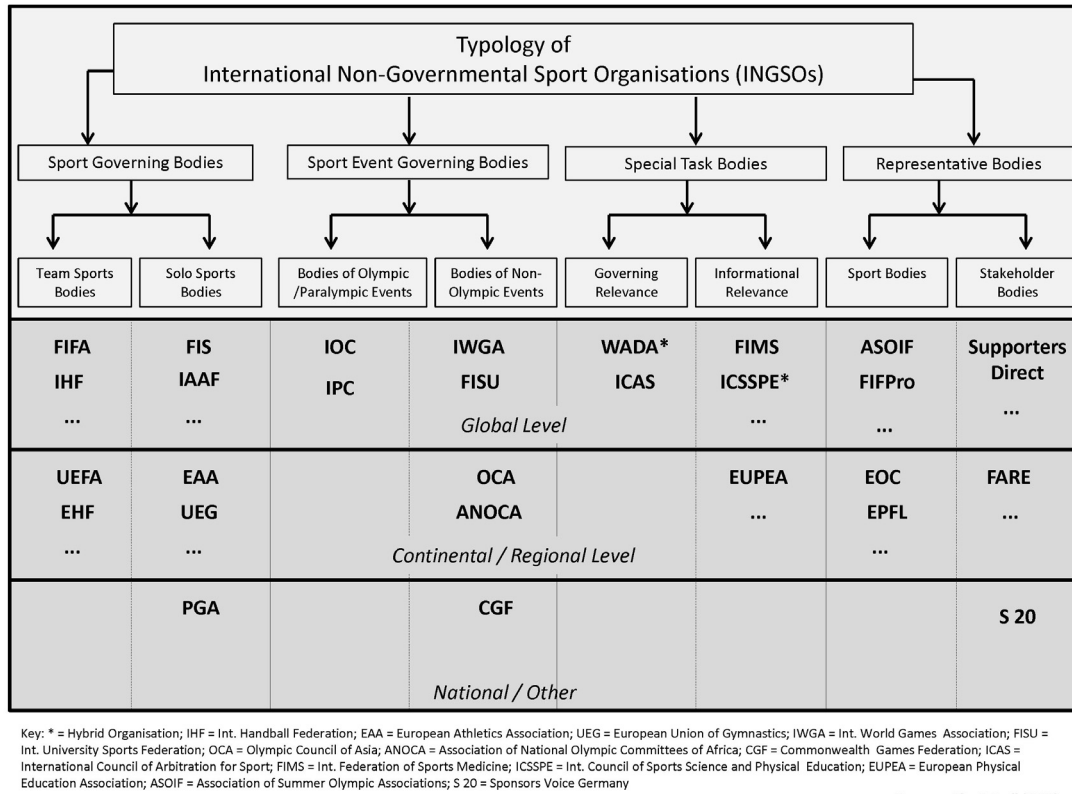
Critical realism implies that the choices for a particular method must “depend on the nature of the object of study and what one wants to learn about it” (Sayer, 2000, p. 19). When investigating good governance in sport, the researcher is confronted with the lack of a set of core and homogeneous principles and also a clear lack of substantive empirical evidence of the internal workings of INGSOs. Thus, in order to deal with those knowledge gaps, this study employs a triangulation of research methods (e.g. McNabb, 2004). In order to determine whether the lack of good governance is indeed widespread among INGSOs, there is a need for empirical evidence. However, the way in which that evidence is interpreted may vary, since conceptualisations of what constitutes good governance in INGSOs vary perforce.

Our research focuses on Sport Governing Bodies (SGB), arguably the most important type of INGSOs. In identifying this category, we use the following typology of INGSOs, based on that of Forster and Pope (2004, p. 79 ff.), who identify four categories: Team Sports Governing Bodies, Solo Sports Governing Bodies, Sport Event Governing Bodies and Specialist Bodies like the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).²²⁵ Our categorisation

²²⁵ It must be noted that WADA is in fact a hybrid organisation, since it is governed and funded equally by the Sports Movement and governments (see Casini, 2009).

is similar, but more detailed and hence, at least in our view, better suited to grasp the complexity of the sport world (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Typology of international non-governmental sports organisations



For reasons of clarity, each of the four categories of INGSOs is subdivided into two sections. The distinctive features of the four categories of INGSOs are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Distinctive features of the four types of INGSOs

| INGSO | Distinctive feature |
|------------------------------|---|
| Sport Governing Bodies | Team Sports or Solo Sports ²²⁶ |
| Sport Event Governing Bodies | Olympic / Paralympic Events or Non-Olympic Events |
| Special Task Bodies | Direct Impact on Governing or no direct impact |
| Representative Bodies | Sport Bodies or Stakeholder Bodies |

Firstly, an explorative set of parameters was composed based on a selection of available literature on good governance, good corporate governance, democratic governance and good governance in sports organisations. Since information on the internal functioning of INGSOs is only scarcely available, the focus was inevitably on parameters for which the data was actually publicly available. Several INGSOs were contacted via e-mail in order to obtain more comprehensive data, but none did respond. Nevertheless, INGSOs normally do publish their statutes, constitution or bylaws online, so data for rules based

226 Given the blurring boundaries between Solo Sports and Team Sports, we adhere to Forster and Pope's (2004, p. 91) view that Solo sports are those for which one-against-one competition is intrinsic to the nature of the game.

or *de jure* indicators of good governance could be gathered (Kaufman and Kraay, 2007, p. 5-9). Those were then supplemented with the more outcome based indicators available on the organisations' websites (Kaufman and Kraay, 2007, p. 9-12).

Subsequently, the scheme was applied to the 35 SGBs that are officially recognised by the IOC. That means that Sport Event Governing Bodies, Special Task Bodies and Representative Bodies such as the leagues in North-American sports that are often even more powerful than their corresponding SGBs, fall outside the scope of the research. In order to interpret the outcomes of the survey, the focus was on three issues which are defined in academic literature as particularly problematic with regard to the governance of INGSOs. Conceptual and theoretical frameworks from political science were used where appropriate in order to analyse the data with the view of painting an objective picture on the current state of governance in INGSOs.

Accountability

Accountability is a cornerstone of both public and corporate governance because it constitutes the principle that informs the processes whereby those who hold and exercise authority are held to account (Aucoin and Heintzman, 2000, p. 45). Bovens (2007) defines accountability in the narrow sense as “a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pose judgement, and the actor may face consequences” (p. 450). As such, it requires three elements: the actor is obliged to inform the forum about his or her conduct; there needs to be a possibility for the forum to interrogate the actor and to question the adequacy of the information or the legitimacy of the conduct; and the forum may pass judgement on the conduct of the actor (Bovens, 2007, p. 451). Similar elements are to be found in most definitions of accountability (e.g. Stiglitz, 2003; Grant and Keohane 2005).

The governance of INGSOs is said to be characterised by accountability deficits -a lack of accountability arrangements (Forster and Pope, 2004, p. 9; Pielke, 2013). That is not without danger since a lack of accountability brings with it, and constitutes a breeding ground for, issues related to corruption, the concentration of power, and the lack of democracy and effectiveness (Aucoin and Heintzman, 2000; Mulgan, 2003, p. 8, Bovens 2007, p. 462). Thus, the importance of accountability in public governance is usually explained in three ways, which all have their own separate theoretical perspective on the rationale behind accountability and a separate assessment of accountability relations. First, accountability is important to provide a democratic means to monitor and control government conduct (“the democratic perspective”); second, for preventing the development of concentrations of power (“the constitutional perspective”); and third, to enhance the learning capacity and effectiveness of public administration (“the learning perspective”) (Aucoin and Heintzman 2000; Bovens, 2007, p. 462).

In this section, we apply those three perspectives in order to analyse the accountability issues that confront the governance of sport today. However, the accountability that is being demonstrated by INGSOs should not be limited to the fora that are being discussed here (e.g., see Pielke, 2013). Since INGSOs are charged with taking care of a public good

public good and sport, both at amateur and professional level, relies heavily on public sector support, INGSOs are also expected to demonstrate a high degree of accountability to their surrounding community (Katwala, 2000, p. 3; Henry and Lee, 2004, p. 31; Wyatt, 2004). In fact, a growing public anger at individuals and institutions that are supposed to pursue the public's interests but refuse to answer to their grievances exists not only with regard to state authorities (Elchardus and Smits, 2002; Mulgan, 2003, p. 1; Dalton, 2004), but increasingly as regards INGSOs. Finally, with regard to INGSOs, in many cases the absence of a government that is willing and able to hold them accountable by posing stricter organisational requirements is often regarded as an influential factor that may lead to bad (self-) governance (Forster and Pope, 2004, p. 9). The inter-related question of state (or European Union) intervention will not be treated here (see Geeraert *et al.* 2012).

The democratic perspective: Member federations

The democratic perspective of public accountability is extremely important since citizens should be able to control those holding public office (March and Olsen, 1995, p. 141-181; Mulgan, 2003). In parliamentary democracy, the relation between citizens and popular representatives can be defined in accordance with the principal-agent model (Strøm, 2000). That means that the people, who are the primary principals in a democracy, have given away their sovereignty to popular representatives. Accountability arrangements and mechanisms then help to provide the political principals with information about how their interests are represented and offer incentives to agents to commit themselves to the agenda of the people (Przeworski, Stokes and Manin, 1999; Strøm, 2000; Bovens, 2007, p. 456).

Such a form of accountability can be said to exist in corporate governance as well, although it is not always well developed (Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Hart, 1995). Multi-national companies are answerable to their shareholders, who have an important watchdog function as it can be said that there is a chain of control from the shareholders to the board of directors to the management. In that way, the board is the agent and the shareholders are the principal.

INGSOs do not have shareholders or citizens as principals, but since they are membership organisations, they have a membership-based control structure, which entails that the annual general meeting controls the activity of the board, which they elected to oversee organisation management and to hire personnel and in which ultimate authority is vested (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007, p. 11; Enjolras, 2009, p. 769). Indeed, the member federations of SGBs usually "own" the organisation since they have created it (Forster and Pope 2004, p. 107). However, in the largest SGBs, member federations are now partly dependent on the funds they receive from their corresponding SGB (Forster and Pope, 2004, p. 102; Schenk, 2011, p. 2). Moreover, SGBs often make vast sums of money and this has made them independent from their member federations (Forster and Pope, 2004, p. 102).

Our survey indicates that at least 18 (51%) SGBs give funding to their members, directly or through development programmes. For the others, we found no references to funding,

but this does not necessarily mean that it is not being distributed (see table 2). Of course, there is nothing wrong with funding member organisations per se. On the contrary, supporting member associations and confederations financially reflects solidarity and helps developing the sport. However, it also potentially entails certain risks, since associations may be influenced in the use of their powers within the organisation (Pieth, 2011, p. 31) and/or become rather benevolent towards or even servants to their SGBs (Forster and Pope, 2004, p. 102). As such, funds could for instance be used to ensure votes, to support a certain agenda or to ensure the (re-)election of officers (Forster and Pope, 2004, p. 113). In that case, members will not hold their corresponding SGB accountable and turn from a watchdog into a lapdog for those who govern the organisation.

Thus, it is paramount that funds are properly distributed by SGBs. For only two (10%) of the 18 organisations which grant funding, we found that funding was distributed according to objective criteria (see table 2). In the absence of such criteria, SGBs can distribute financial means *ad-hoc*, which increases the risk of haphazard, improper use. Nevertheless, the positive counter side is that SGBs can influence their members through the motivational aspect of subsidising. Still, given the potential risks involved, specific decisions related to the distribution of funding would have to be objectively reproducible, which would also make decisions understandable for members (Pieth, 2011, p. 31).

At the least, the funds should be distributed in a transparent manner, which would make them open to outside scrutiny (Schenk, 2011, p. 6). We only managed to find three SGBs (17%) that provide more or less detailed information about the amounts distributed. Three others only gave partial information, while 12 SGBs (67%) did not provide any information at all (see table 2).

Table 2: Funding, distributed among members

| | n | % |
|---|----|------|
| Members receive funding | | |
| Yes | 18 | ~51% |
| No/ unknown | 17 | ~49% |
| For 18 SGBs known to distribute funding: | | |
| Objective criteria for funding? | | |
| Yes | 2 | ~11% |
| No | 16 | ~89% |
| Distributed funds available through website? | | |
| Yes | 3 | ~17% |
| Partly | 3 | ~17% |
| No | 12 | ~67% |

Forster and Pope (2004, p. 107-108) argue that a realistic interpretation of the relationship between SGBs and their members would be that SGBs operate independently of the national federations and not as their agent. In fact, according to Mulgan (2003) “the principal who holds the rights of accountability is often in a position of weakness against his or her supposed agent” (p. 11). Such weakness indeed provides for the reason for accountability in the first place and underscores the importance of adequate arrangements. The main way in which member organisations can hold their SGB accountable is through their statutory powers. Most notably, these relate to the election of the people that govern the organisation. In accordance with principles of corporate governance and democracy in general, the members should be able to choose their president and governing council.

According to our research, in all 35 SGBs the legislative body –usually named ‘congress’ – is competent to elect the president. In only 23 organisations (66%), the congress elects the governing council. Nevertheless, in 9 SGBs (26%) the congress is only partly involved, but often that is due to a number of mandatory seats for regional members (see table 3). In the case of the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) however, the president is allowed to choose 10 members to the governing council. In the cases where the congress has no voice in the election of the executive body (3 SGBs), members do have a seat, but the democratic character of the election procedure is doubtful.

Table 3: Role of the congress in the election of president and executive body

| | n | % |
|---|----|------|
| Does congress elect governing council? | | |
| yes | 23 | ~66% |
| partly | 9 | ~26% |
| no | 3 | ~9% |
| Does congress elect president? | | |
| Yes | 35 | 100% |

The congress has an important monitoring function with regard to the executive body (Strøm, 2000). Thus, it is important that the legislative bodies of SGBs come together frequently, so that their opinion is heard and those that rule the SGB are obligated to defend their governance on a regular basis. As shown in table 4, most SGBs (17; 49%) organise a congress meeting on an annual basis. In fifteen SGBs (40%), the congress meets every two years and in 2 (6%) only once every four years.

Table 4: Frequency of congress meetings

| | n | % |
|---------------------------------------|----|------|
| Frequency of congress meetings | | |
| every four years | 2 | ~6% |
| every two years | 15 | ~43% |
| Once | 17 | ~49% |
| Unknown | 1 | ~3% |

The organisation of congresses can of course be rather costly. As it is important that a high attendance rate is achieved, SGBs should make an effort to reimburse travel expenses and hotel stays for poorer members although this might be difficult for smaller SGBs. Nevertheless, as a minimum, the target should be set at one meeting per year in order to give the congress the possibility to scrutinise annually produced accounts and the general policy of the past year.

It is important that the congress, as principals, have complete and credible information on the accuracy of the accounting and financial reporting of the governing body, the agent. In order to make sure the agent uses resources in accordance with the principals wishes, monitoring mechanisms such as a financial and audit committee or external auditing can be put in place (OECD, 2004, pp. 54-56; Spanhove and Verhoest, 2007). For reasons of objectivity, such committees should be sufficiently independent from the executive body of the organisation (Hart, 1995, p. 682). As table 5 indicates below, the vast majority of surveyed SGBs lack such committees.

Table 5: Presence of financial and audit committees

| | n | % |
|--|----|-----|
| Presence of financial committee | | |
| Yes | 11 | ~31 |
| No | 24 | ~69 |
| Presence of audit committee | | |
| Yes | 12 | ~34 |
| No | 23 | ~66 |

The constitutional perspective: checks and balances

The main rationale behind the constitutional perspective of accountability is to withstand the ever-present tendency toward power concentration and abuse of powers in the executive power (Bovens, 2007, p. 466). Hence, one of the cornerstones of democracy is the systems of checks and balances in state authority, which limits the powers of the legislative, executive and judiciary branches of the state. For instance, the power to request that account be rendered over particular aspects is given to law courts or audit instances.

The separation of powers is also a good governance practice in non-governmental organisations or in the business world (OECD, 2004, p. 12; Enjolras, 2009). For instance, the separation of power between the management of an organisation and the board entails a system of checks and balances that entails the implementation of internal control procedures (Enjolras, 2009, p. 773).

There seems to be growing agreement in the professional sports world that a system of checks and balances and control mechanisms are also needed in international non-governmental sports organisations (INGSOs) and that it constitutes good governance (IOC, 2008, p. 4; Philips, 2011, p. 26). Indeed, a checks and balances system is para-

mount to prevent the concentration of power in an INGSO and it ensures that decision making is robust, independent and free from improper influence (Arnaut, 2006, p. 58). In reality, the concept of separation of powers in sports governance usually implies separating the disciplinary bodies from the political and executive arms of a sports body. That means that active officials are usually excluded from the disciplinary body and –if present– the appeal body of the SGB, thus separating the disciplinary bodies from the political and executive arms of the organisation.

According to Pieth (2011), that exclusion should be extended to the ethics committee of the INGSO. Indeed, INGSOs seem to have been pre-occupied with dealing with corruption and malpractice on the playing field rather than with the quality of their own internal functioning (Forster and Pope, 2004, p. 112). Nevertheless, checks and balances should also apply to staff working in the different boards and departments of an organisation since they usually ensure that no manager or board member or department has absolute control over decisions, and clearly define the assigned duties, which is the very core of the concept. Taking the example of comparable bodies such as the World Bank or the IOC, Pieth recommends including external members into FIFA's Ethics committee. In the view of checks and balances, an ethics committee could in theory be called to adjudicate on the behaviour of members of the executive body of an INGSO. Therefore, the Committee should be elected by the Congress rather than by the governing body. Moreover, the ethics committee should have the power to initiate proceedings *ex officio*, thus without referral by the executive body or president (Pieth 2011).

Our research indicates that 17 organisations (49%) have adopted a code of ethics and only 12 (34%) have an ethics committee that monitors compliance with such a code. Only three organisations have an independent ethics committee, which means that they operate independently from the executive body of the organisation.²²⁷ If the latter is not the case, the committee cannot be expected to adjudicate appropriately on the behaviour of members of the executive body. In only one organisation, the International Cycling Union (UCI), the ethics committee has the power to initiate proceedings on its own initiative. In most organisations, the president or the board must first refer a case to the committee before it can start investigations, which severely undermines the checks and balances with regard to the management of the organisation. Table 6 summarises these findings.²²⁸

227 Here, we used outcome rather than rules based indicators. For instance, an organisation may have enshrined in its statutes that its general assembly elects the members of the ethics committee, but when some of them also have a seat in the executive body of the organisation, we do not deem the committee to be independent.

228 We did not include any budgeting information on ethics committees, since such information was extremely scarcely available.

Table 6: Ethics committees

| | n | % |
|-------------------------------------|----|-----|
| Presence of code of ethics | | |
| Yes | 17 | ~49 |
| No | 18 | ~51 |
| Presence of ethics committee | | |
| Yes | 12 | ~34 |
| No | 23 | ~66 |
| Independent ethics committee | | |
| Yes | 3 | ~9 |
| No | 9 | ~26 |
| Ex officio investigations | | |
| Yes | 1 | ~3 |
| No | 9 | ~26 |
| Unclear | 2 | ~6 |

The learning perspective: the impetus to change the status-quo

One of the major purposes of public accountability is that it induces the executive branch to learn (van den Berg, 1999, p. 40; Aucoin and Heintzman, 2000; Bovens, 2007, p. 463). The possibility of punishment in the event of errors and shortcomings motivates governments to search for more intelligent ways of organising their business. In addition, accountability offers a mechanism to confront administrators to reflect on the governance failures resulting from their past conduct (Bovens, 2007, p. 463).

The fact that most SGBs (*de facto*) are not representative bodies whose executive officers are clearly responsible and accountable to a democratically elected assembly has as a consequence that member organisation will not likely provide an impetus to change the status-quo within the SGBs (Forster and Pope, 2004, pp. 102-106; Schenk, 2011). In fact, the lack of accountability mechanisms in SGBs constitutes a vicious circle as it prevents the impetus for change towards stronger accountability within the organisations.

Accountability and compliance issues

SGBs are able to choose the optimal regulatory context for their operations and as such they pick a favourable environment as the home base for their international activities (Forster and Pope, 2004, p. 9; Scherer and Palazzo, 2011, p. 905). Reportedly, this is mostly Switzerland, where they are embedded into a legal system that gives them enormous protection against internal and external examination (Forster and Pope, 2004, p. 112). Our research indicates that 27 SGBs (77%), including the largest organisations, are indeed based in Switzerland (see table 7).

Table 7: Registered offices of the surveyed SGBs

| Organisation | Registered Office | Country |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| AIBA | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| BWF | Kuala Lumpur | Malaysia |
| FEI | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| FIBA | Geneva | Switzerland |
| FIBT | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| FIE | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| FIFA | Zürich | Switzerland |
| FIG | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| FIH | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| FIL | Berchtesgarden | Germany |
| FILA | Corsier-sur-Vevey | Switzerland |
| FINA | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| FIS | Oberhofen am Thunersee | Switzerland |
| FISA | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| FITA | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| FIVB | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| IAAF | Monaco | Monaco |
| IBU | Salzburg | Austria |
| ICF | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| IGF | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| IHF | Basle | Switzerland |
| IIHF | Zürich | Switzerland |
| IJF | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| IRB | Dublin | Ireland |
| ISAF | Southampton | UK |
| ISSF | Munich | Germany |
| ISU | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| ITF | London | UK |
| ITTF | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| ITU | Vancouver | Canada |
| IWF | Budapest | Hungary |
| UCI | Aigle | Switzerland |
| UIPM | Monaco | Monaco |
| WCF | Lausanne | Switzerland |
| WTF | Seoul | Korea |

The absence of a state authority that can or will hold private self-regulations accountable is not without danger to general principles of good (democratic) governance. It is assumed that the potential threat of stricter regulations, unless the potentially affected actors adapt their behaviour to the expectations of the legislator, pushes those organisations which operate “in the shadow of hierarchy” towards compliance. In the absence of

such a “whip in the window”, the expectation is that the reliability of voluntary self-commitments to good democratic governance –if they even exist– would suffer (Sharp 1994, p. 41; Wolf, 2008, p. 239). According to Wolf (2008, p. 244), “even the most prominent functional equivalents to the checks and balances institutionalised within the political systems of democratic states (...) cannot be provided by private actors alone”. On the contrary, some authors even go so far as to suggest that hierarchical organisations which are not subject to (local) democratic control cannot be expected to have internal practices conducive to democratic manners (Hirst, 2000, p. 21).

Participation

Participation should be distinguished from accountability, since the former implies proactive input into the policy process, whereas the latter is in nature retrospective: “actors are to account to a forum after the fact” (Harlow, 2002, p. 185; Bovens 2007, p. 453). That is not to say that certain stakeholders, especially those that unite themselves into pressure groups, do not possess the power to scrutinise, criticise and demand changes from their corresponding SGBs (Mulgan, 2003, p. 25), but the distinction should be clear.

According to Arnstein (1969), “participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy –a revered idea that is vigorously applauded by virtually everyone” (261). Everyone, that is, except SGBs. Their main stakeholders, i.e. athletes and sometimes clubs, have traditionally been kept out of the policy processes that are decisive to the rules that govern their activities. Indeed, sport is traditionally governed through hierarchical chains of command. That structure is undemocratic since those at the very bottom of the chain, i.e. clubs and athletes, are automatically subject to the rules and regulations of the governing bodies, often without being able to influence them to their benefit. As a consequence, sports policy is rarely carried out in consultation with athletes, and almost never in partnership with athletes (Houlihan, 2004, pp. 421-422). That seems paradoxical and somewhat ironic, as sporting rules and regulations often have a profound impact on athletes’ professional and even personal lives. Moreover, hierarchic governance in sport is a major source of conflict, since those that are excluded from the decision making process may want to challenge the federation’s regulations and decisions (Tomlinson, 1983, p. 173; García, 2007, p. 205; Parrish and McArdle, 2004, p. 411).

However, in recent years, we witness an increasing influence of athletes in the development of policies in SGBs (Thibault, Kihl, and Babiak, 2010). Nevertheless, as Houlihan (2004) puts, “the few governing bodies of sport that do provide a voice for athletes do so either through limited membership of the body’s decision-making forum or through the formation of an “athletes committee/ commission” linked to the main forum, but safely quarantined from any significant decision-making opportunities” (pp. 421-422).

As demonstrated in table 7, our survey indicates that in 28 of the investigated SGBs (80%), stakeholders are in some way represented. In all of those cases the represented stakeholders include athletes, who are represented by means of an athletes commission in 24 SGBs (69%). However, our data clearly supports Houlihan’s (2004, pp. 421-422)

view: only 4 SGBs (11%) grant athletes some sort of (very limited) decision making power. In all other cases, with the exception of two SGBs that do not share information on the matter, athletes' representatives have only been given a consultative status. Thus, while in most cases, athletes have been given a "voice", they certainly do not have a "vote". Or, to put it differently: institutionalised consultation does not equal actual participation, as the latter requires that affected parties have access to decision making and power (Woods, 1999, p. 44; Young, 2000).²²⁹

The commercialisation of sport has made certain sports clubs, especially those in top-level professional football, big power players, and that has enhanced their position in the governance of their sport (Colucci and Geeraert, 2012). Nevertheless, as table 1 indicates, at the global level, that evolution only resulted in institutionalised consultation for clubs within FIFA. Of course, it must be noted that eight of the researched organisations govern purely individual sports.

As can be witnessed from table 8, in general and with the exception of athletes, the SGBs clearly lack official channels through which the various stakeholders can participate in the decision-making processes. That is not to say that all stakeholders should be given institutionalised participation, nor that granting institutionalised participation necessarily constitutes good governance. In any case, it is important that a balance of stakeholder interests is preserved in an SGB, certainly with regard to labour issues. For instance, analogous with collective bargaining practices, clubs (employers) and athletes (workers) inevitably have different interests and therefore should be equally represented within SGBs that govern team sports (Colucci and Geeraert, 2012).

229 This contrasts with the situation in North-America, where collective bargaining agreements govern the employer-employee relationships between the owners of professional sports teams and players' associations (Dryer, 2008). In Europe, on the other hand, sport was for a long time regarded solely as a leisure activity and therefore, the "sports industry" concept is not yet as developed and player unions have been relatively weaker and not equipped with the necessary bargaining powers (Halgreen, 2004, p. 79).

Table 8: Stakeholder representation

| | n | % |
|--|----|------|
| Stakeholder representation | | |
| Yes | 28 | ~80% |
| No | 7 | ~20% |
| Decision making power for stakeholders | | |
| Representative athletes commission has a seat in the board | 4 | ~11% |
| None | 28 | ~80% |
| Undisclosed | 3 | ~9% |
| Categories of represented stakeholders | | |
| Athletes | 28 | ~80% |
| Referees | 2 | ~6% |
| Coaches | 4 | ~11% |
| Clubs | 1 | ~3% |
| Judges | 1 | ~3% |
| Media | 1 | ~3% |
| Veterinarians | 1 | ~3% |
| Existing stakeholder committees | | |
| Athletes | 24 | ~69% |
| Coaches | 4 | ~11% |
| Events | 2 | ~6% |
| Clubs | 1 | ~3% |
| Referee | 1 | ~3% |
| Veterinarians | 1 | ~3% |
| Media | 1 | ~3% |
| Marketing and TV | 1 | ~3% |

Sport organisations often complain about a lack of legal certainty, especially with regard to EU law. They worry that their rules, transfer rules in particular, might be contested over and over again by unsatisfied stakeholders and therefore, they ask for a special treatment of their sector (see, e.g., Infantino, 2006; IOC and FIFA 2007; Hill, 2009). It is important to realise that, regardless of questions of righteousness (either moral or legal), the legal uncertainty in the sports sector has its roots in the lack of “vote”, or even “voice” of stakeholders. If stakeholders were to be included in the processes decisive of the very rules that regulate their activities, they would very likely experience a sense of “ownership”. That means that they will come to see the decisions of the SGB as their own decisions, which will make policy implementation more effective (World Bank, 1996, Woods 1999, p. 44). This will very likely preclude them to challenge these decisions - that is, if they perceive their representatives who are involved in the policy process as legitimate (Saward, 2005). In order to obtain much-desired legal certainty, SGBs should therefore focus on actual participation for their stakeholders. Moreover, several scholars

have noted that an equal representation of stakeholders in the policy process contributes to long-term effectiveness (e.g. Young 1992, 1994).

Although the here researched rules-based indicators may differ from the actual outcome, as informal processes may sometimes lead to actual decision-making power for stakeholders, it is safe to say that there still is ample room for improvement on the matter of stakeholder representation in SGBs. That goes in particular for athlete representation, since mere consultation offers no assurance that athletes' concerns and ideas will actually be taken into account (Arnstein, 1969, p. 219).

Executive body members

This section presents empirical evidence on executive body members of SGBs. In particular, using a mixture of input and outcome based indicators, the focus is put on nationality issues, gender balance, and age and term limits.

Nationality issues

There is no general geographic approach among the SGBs with regard to identifying confederations. Drawing inspiration from the structure of *inter alia* FIFA, we discern six regions when presenting the results on how the executive bodies are composed: Africa, Asia, Europe, NaCaCa²³⁰, Oceania and South America.

Our survey data clearly demonstrates that Europe has a dominant role within the SGBs. As shown in table 9, the old continent has almost twice as many officers in the executive bodies as the other regions combined. Europe has in average four seats while the other regions have between two and 0.6. Thus, our data supports the calls for greater diversity in the executive and governing bodies in SGBs (e.g. Katwala, 2000; IOC, 2009; Schenk, 2011).

Table 9: Number of members on the executive bodies per region

| | n | % |
|-------------------------------|-----|------|
| Executive body members | | |
| Africa | 33 | ~8% |
| Asia | 75 | ~18% |
| Europe | 191 | ~47% |
| NaCaCa | 58 | ~14% |
| Oceania | 22 | ~5% |
| South America | 26 | ~6% |

The European domination does not only extend to the number of members on the executive body, but can also be witnessed with regard to the number of presidents and general secretaries. As table 10 below shows, 25 presidents (71%) and 26 general secretaries (74%) are European.

230 North America, Central America and the Caribbean

European athletes have always been well-represented at the Olympics and Europe has until now hosted 29 of the 48 Olympics and is also well-represented in the all-time Olympic medal table. Together with a great Olympic history, Europe has had great economic and political impact during the 20th century and its all-together historic influential role explains its current domination. Recently, other regions have developed economically, politically and also in sports. In that regard, the Europe's dominant role could be labelled anachronistic.

Table 10: Number of presidents and secretary generals per region

| | n | % |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Number of presidents | | |
| Africa | 2 | 6 |
| Asia | 4 | 11 |
| Europe | 25 | 71 |
| NaCaCa | 2 | 6 |
| Oceania | 0 | 0 |
| South America | 2 | 6 |
| | n | % |
| Number of secretary generals | | |
| Africa | 1 | 3% |
| Asia | 2 | 6% |
| Europe | 26 | 74% |
| NaCaCa | 6 | 17% |
| Oceania | 0 | 0% |
| South America | 0 | 0% |

In many ways, the United States remains the most dominant country in the world and this is clearly reflected in its sporting influence, although there is no American president within the SGBs. Since it has 31 of the regions' 58 seats, it is clear that the United States has a dominating role within the NaCaCa region. Moreover, the US has the most seats per nation worldwide, no other nation has more than its 19 seats and at least one American has a seat in in 24 SGBs' executive bodies.

Another great power, China, does not have an equally dominant role as the US since it has "only" 10 seats in the executive bodies. China does not even hold the most seats among the Asian countries since South Korea indeed possesses 16 seats, while delivering two of the four Asian SGB presidents. Given the emerging economic status of the country, China's modest representation within SGBs is rather surprising.

In Europe, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Spain all have a leading role and ample opportunity to exert influence within the SGBs. The 'big five' possess 89 of the 191 seats that Europe currently holds and the same tendency can be witnessed with regard to presidents and general secretaries. Thirteen out of 25 European president and 15 out of 26 European general secretaries are currently held by an official from above mentioned nations.

Contrasting with its size and performance on the global sporting scene, Switzerland has many prestigious posts within the SGBs. Although its five general secretary positions can to some extent be explained by the fact that the SGBs' are often based in Switzerland, its five president posts are notable. In addition, two of the most prestigious SGBs, FIFA and IIHF, have a Swiss president.

Finally, one hundred nations which have a National Olympic Committee recognised by the IOC are not represented within any of the surveyed SGBs. Economic reasons may explain this phenomenon.

Gender inequality

Equity issues in terms of positions within the organisation have been raised within a number of INGSOs, in particular with regard to gender (Henry and Lee, 2004, p. 33). Consequently, there have been calls for greater diversity within the executive bodies of INGSOs (Schenk, 2011; Council of Europe, 2012).

Our survey indicates that there is an overwhelming overrepresentation of male members within the SGBs' executive bodies. Only 12 per cent of the executive members of all SGBs are female. Fifteen of the 35 analysed organisations do not have female representatives within the executive body and the same pattern can be discerned with the number of female presidents. As table 11 below indicates, only three of the surveyed SGBs have a female president and only four have a female secretary general.

Table 11: Female presidents and secretary generals

| | n | % |
|---------------------------------|----|------|
| Female president | | |
| Yes | 3 | ~9% |
| No | 32 | ~91% |
| Female secretary general | | |
| Yes | 4 | ~11% |
| No | 31 | ~89% |

As table 12 below shows, only 20 of the 35 SGBs have a female representative in the executive body and only 12 have more than one female representative.

Some of the analysed SGBs have a reasonable distribution of board seats between men and women. In addition, 16 organisations have some form of regulations in their statutes assuring female representation within the organisation, such as a quota in the executive body or in some of the organisations' commissions. Both FIH and ITU have introduced certain provisions into their statutes with the aim to achieve a gender balance and this has proven to be an important way of integrating more female representatives into the organisations' executive bodies.

Katwala (2000, p. 3) stresses the importance of sport as a powerful symbol and catalyst for changes in gender roles. In order to realise a sustainable sporting culture, it is of

great importance to involve women in the governance of sport. Paternalistic claims that everybody's interest are taken into account will not be taken serious if key groups such as women not are involved (*Ibid.* p. 9). Hence, it is important that female representatives are placed in decision-making positions so that they can contribute their experiences and views to the organisations and even become role models for other women who want to become involved in sport organisations.

Table 12: Female inclusion

| | n | % |
|--|----|------|
| Female representatives | | |
| Yes | 20 | ~57% |
| No | 15 | ~43% |
| More than one female representative | | |
| Yes | 12 | ~34% |
| No | 23 | ~66% |

Tenure issues

There have been calls for a limitation of terms in office from outside the sports world (e.g. Council of Europe 2012; Transparency International, 2011). Katwala (2000, p. 27) also calls for a term limitation, both for presidents and executive body members, and states that presidents that hold office for more than two four year terms may result in an unhealthy concentration of power.

The idea of term limitation derives from antiquity (Oakley, 1994, 14 ff.). It is presumed that term limits constitute a remedy for several tenure issues. Firstly, for high rates of re-election stemming directly from the tremendous advantages incumbents enjoy over challengers because with seniority comes power. Secondly, for apathetic voters due to the certain re-election of incumbents, which results in politicians naturally losing touch with voters. Hence, term limits make sure that elections are real contests about the issues, provide new ideas for solving problems and prevent the concentration of power (Cohen and Spitzer, 1992, 479-480).

Arguments against term limits are the waste of talent and experience and the presumption that more terms induces elected officials to undertake extensive and arduous enterprises for the public benefit instead of worrying about their prospects after leaving office (*Ibid.*, 480-482). However, it has been argued that term limits in fact reduce the value of holding office, which induces "truthful" behaviour by incumbents, which in turn enables the voter to selectively elect higher quality agents to a second term in office (Smart and Sturm, 2004). From a democratic perspective, it is paramount that individuals have an *actual* possibility to be elected, enabling groups that might previously have been overseen and underrepresented to hold a position of power (Thompson and Moncrief, 1993). Hence, democracy within sport organisations may deepen through a continuous renewal of the core of the organisations.

As table 13 below outlines, only eight out of 35 organisations have regulations outlined in their statutes regarding the number of terms allowed in office, and only six have rules stating that members must stand down when they reach a specific age. Only the FIH and the International Skating Union (ISU) have such limitations in place. Thus, it would certainly be desirable for more international sport organisations to implement term limits into their statutes.

Table 13: Age and term limits within the SGBs

| | n | % |
|------------------------------------|----|------|
| Age limit | | |
| Yes | 6 | ~17% |
| No | 29 | ~83% |
| <i>Average age limit: 73 years</i> | | |
| Term limit | | |
| Yes | 8 | ~23% |
| No | 27 | ~77% |

The monopolisation of power due to a lack of term limits is evidenced for instance by the average number of years SGB presidents are in office, which is a stunning 14. Outliers are the International Luge Federation (FIL), which has only had one president in its 37 year existence, and the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF), whose president has been in office for the past 29 years (see table 14).²³¹ The IOC has had 7 presidents since its founding in 1894, who have been in office for an average of 15 year.

²³¹ We could not find information for the International Rugby Board (IRB) and the International Golf Federation (IGF).

Table 14: Figures on tenures for SGB presidents

| Organisation | Year founded | Number of former presidents | Average years in office for former presidents | Current presidency |
|----------------|--------------|-----------------------------|---|--------------------|
| FIL | 1957 | 1 | 37 | 1994- |
| WTF | 1975 | 1 | 29 | 2004- |
| FIS | 1924 | 3 | 25 | 1998- |
| IAAF | 1912 | 4 | 22 | 1999- |
| FIVB | 1947 | 3 | 22 | 2012- |
| FIBT | 1923 | 4 | 22 | 2010- |
| ITU | 1989 | 1 | 19 | 2008- |
| FISA | 1892 | 5 | 19 | 1989- |
| FILA | 1905 | 5 | 19 | 2002- |
| AIBA | 1920 | 5 | 17 | 2006- |
| FIG | 1881 | 7 | 16 | 1996- |
| ITTF | 1926 | 5 | 15 | 1999- |
| ISSF | 1907 | 5 | 15 | 1980- |
| IHF | 1946 | 4 | 14 | 2000- |
| UCI | 1900 | 8 | 13 | 2005- |
| FIFA | 1904 | 7 | 13 | 1998- |
| UIPM | 1948 | 4 | 11 | 1993- |
| ISU | 1892 | 9 | 11 | 1994 |
| ISAF | 1907 | 6 ²³² | 11 | 2012- |
| IWF | 1905 | 10 | 10 | 2000- |
| WA (FITA) | 1931 | 8 | 9 | 2005- |
| IJF | 1951 | 9 | 8 | 2007- |
| ICF | 1924 | 10 | 8 | 2008- |
| FIH | 1924 | 10 | 8 | 2008- |
| IIHF | 1908 | 12 | 7 | 1994- |
| FIE | 1913 | 14 | 7 | 2008- |
| FIBA | 1932 | 11 | 7 | 2010- |
| FEI | 1921 | 12 | 7 | 2006- |
| FINA | 1913 | 16 | 6 | 2009- |
| WCF | 1966 | 9 | 5 | 2010- |
| BWF | 1934 | 17 | 4 | 2005- |
| ITF | 1913 | 28 ²³³ | 2 | 1999- |
| IRB | 1886 | - | - | 2008- |
| IGF | 1958 | - | - | - |
| IBU | 1993 | 1 ²³⁴ | - | 1993- |
| Average | | 8 | 14 | |

232 From 1906 to 1946 a chairman was elected from time to time to orchestrate the annual meetings.

233 Since 1938.

234 Anders Besseberg has been president since IBU was founded in 1993.

Conclusion

The governance of sport is characterised by self-regulation. SGBs thus determine their own internal functioning while, in general, they are embedded into a legal system that gives them protection against internal and external examination and there exists no generally agreed upon checklists for good governance for these organisations. Although the painted picture is far from a holistic one, the hope is that this paper adds a few empirical insights on structural issues relating to the quality of the self-governance of SGBs to the growing body of academic literature on good governance in sport.

Firstly, this paper presents empirical evidence on the lack of accountability arrangements in SGBs. In particular, the watchdog function of their member organisations is severely undermined by the general absence of objective criteria and transparency in the distribution of funding to members. With regard to checks and balances, arguably the most topical issue is the total lack of independent ethics committees, if any, and their inability to conduct *ex officio* investigations. In sum, accountability deficits not only constitute a breeding ground for corruption and the concentration of power, they also impede the impetus for change towards good governance.

Secondly, our survey demonstrates that most SGBs have institutionalised athlete participation. However, in the overwhelming majority of the organisations, they have not been granted formal decision making power. Moreover, other stakeholders are still largely quarantined from participation opportunities. Although we focused on rules-based indicators with regard to this issue and thus, actual decision making power may vary, it is safe to say that there is still room for improvement on this issue.

Thirdly, with regard to executive body members, there is the rather anachronistic dominance of the European continent and also the preponderance of male officials. SGBs simply cannot claim that everybody's interests are taken into account when key groups are not (sufficiently) involved. In addition, the general lack of term limits poses serious threats with regard to the concentration of power, which is evidenced for instance by the overall number of years SGB presidents are in office.

The authors of this paper do not claim to paint a comprehensive picture on governance issues in SGBs relating to accountability, good governance and executive body members. Indeed, there is still a lot of data left to be uncovered and many research avenues are still to be explored. For instance, the focus of this paper was mostly on rules based indicators. Future research could focus on outcome based indicators such as the actual influence stakeholders can exert in decision making processes. In addition, although the issue was present between the lines, the topical good governance concept of transparency was perhaps not given the attention it deserves.

In spite of the obvious limitations of this paper, the presented empirical evidence clearly supports the recent calls for good governance in sport. SGBs need to agree upon a set of well-defined criteria of good governance and take action towards compliance with those. Only then, the self-governance of sport will be credible and justifiable.

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