

Reassessing the Democracy Debate in Sport Alternatives to the One-Association-One-Vote- Principle?

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The Challenge: Improving Democratic Structures in International Sport Organisations

Democracy is considered as one of the Western world's most salient success stories. Generally defined as "Government by the people" democracy constitutes a type of political system in which the sovereign powers reside in the people (as a whole) while political decisions are exercised either directly by them or by representatives elected by them. As a general principle, democracies are based on autonomous individuals, who are all deemed equal and who vote to declare and register "one's opinion" which is then duly weighted within the relevant democratic institutions. Based on this general principle the question of the best electoral system is an ongoing debate among both politicians and political science (Boix, 1999; Lijphart, 1985; Farrell, 2001; Colomer, 2004; Gallagher and Mitchell, 2005; Klingemann, 2009; especially in view of the "effects and determinants of electoral systems" (Taagapera and Shugart, 1989).

Though the international system is considered as anarchic its voting procedures are based on principles that are similar to those in national democratic systems. As such, individual states are considered as autonomous individuals by both international law, and political science. This perspective was at first explicitly expressed by the "Law of Nations" published by the political philosopher Emerich de Vattel in 1758: "Since men are naturally equal, and a perfect equality prevails in their rights and obligations, as equally proceeding from nature – Nations composed of men (...) are naturally equal, and inherit from nature the same obligations and rights. Power or weakness does not in this respect produce any difference. A dwarf is as much a man as a giant; a small republic is no less a sovereign state than the most powerful kingdom." Based on this approach, the general principle that is applied to in international organisations – independent from competencies or policy fields –, allocates each country (or respectively each federation) one vote to exercise in democratic decisions – disregarding its size, financial contributions or influence in the world. As such, the equality of voting is broadly accepted as general rule,²² though from the beginning on there has been a debate on different modes of representation (Wehberg 1944), on the relation of smaller and larger states (Russett, 1955) and more recently on democracy in general (Zweifel, 2006).

This general principle is also anchored in international sport organisations. Democratic decision-making in most international governing bodies of sport is based on the current

²² Exceptions are for example the World Bank or the IMF, specifically due to the formal voting powers allotted to donors that are given more votes than receivers. For instance the US has about fifteen per cent of the vote.

one-nation (one-association/federation-), one-vote principle. Although this ideal has a strong appeal, it has been realized with increasing frequency and severity that decision-making based on equal voting embraces democratic limits and may cause corruption of unscrupulous players (Kistner and Weinreich, 2000; Chappelet and Kübler-Mabbott, 2008; MacAloona, 2011). Allegations of vote buying in particular have arisen in the international governing bodies of sport in the last two decades. Starting with the bid scandal of the Olympic Games in Salt Lake City 2002 and reaching up to the foundation of new national federations in countries without any clubs and players these allegations have led to ongoing debates on a reform of voting procedures in international sport organisations. The arguments have shown a recurring pattern, with rich or larger federations demanding more power due to their greater financial support, while poor or smaller federations arguing for sovereign equality.

Against this backdrop this paper takes a closer look at 13 international sports organisations at the European and International level in view of their democratic quality. In its first part the paper displays the empirical ground by investigating the statutes of international sport organizations. The second part contributes to reform options and develops potential alternatives to the existing one-association-one vote-principle. The last part of this paper draws some preliminary conclusions and recommendations by offering some food for thoughts for further considerations and debates.

The Current Situation: Imbalanced Voting Procedures in International Sport Organisations

The object of this chapter is to outline the voting procedures of 13 selected international sport federations. Part one is about general information, the selection of federations, founding years, legal conditions and headquarters of all 13 international sport federations. In part two the Legislative and the Congress as well as distributions of votes, elections and decisions will be analysed. In part three the Executive, its members and the voting procedures will be in the focus.

General information:

Selection of federations (see below table 1)

The empirical basis of the analysis of voting procedures is focused on 13 international sport federations. Eleven of them can be allocated to the sports Basketball, Football, Ski, Rowing, Biathlon, Handball, Ice-Hockey, Judo, Rugby, Tennis, and Wheelchair-Basketball. In addition, the international umbrella associations of the Olympic and Paralympic Committees will be part of this investigation. Three of the eleven sports federations are counted among winter sports (Ski, Biathlon, Ice-Hockey). Six of them are obvious team sports (Basketball, Football, Handball, Ice-Hockey, Rugby, Wheelchair-Basketball), two of them can be considered both as team sports and individual sports (Rowing, Tennis).

Concerning the selection of federations under consideration it was regarded to consider team and individual sports as well as winter and summer sports. Moreover, Rugby is a non-Olympic and one of the oldest federations. The number of national member federa-

tions of each international sport federation varies from over 200 of Basketball, Football, Judo and the Olympic Committee and below 100 of Biathlon, Ice-Hockey, Rugby and Wheelchair Rugby.

Founding years, legal conditions and headquarters (see below table 1)

The oldest sport federation is Rugby founded in 1886, followed by Rowing founded in 1892. The youngest sport federations are Biathlon and Wheelchair-Rugby founded in 1993. Independent of the founding years eleven federations are non-profit organizations, nine of them have their headquarters in Swiss (IPC seated in Germany, IBU seated in Austria). Two federations have the legal condition of a private company limited (Rugby, Tennis).

Table 1: Selection of federations, founding years, legal conditions and headquarters

	FIBA	FIFA	FIS	FISA	IBU	IHF	IIHF	IJF	IRB	ITF	IWRF	IOC	IPC
Member federations	213	209	110	137	61	167	72	201	97	145	26	204	170
Summer (S) Winter (W)	S	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	S	S	S	S+W	S+W
Team (T) Individual (I)	T	T	I	T+I	I	T	T	I	T	T+I	T	T+I	T+I
Founding year	1932	1904	1924	1892	1993	1946	1908	1951	1886	1913	1993	1894	1989
Legal condition	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	●	●	■	■	■
Legend	■ non-profit organization ● private company limited ○ n/a												
Headquarter	CH	CH	CH	CH	A	CH	CH	CH	IRL	BAH	CH	CH	GER

Source: Own representation

Legislative Congress

Term and significance of the Congress

The term 'Congress' is not used uniformly: In the IRB and the IPC the legislative organ is referred to as the 'General Assembly' instead of the Congress; the ITF names it 'Council' and the IOC uses the term 'Session'. In the following the term Congress is the generic term for General Assembly, Council and Session. The great majority characterises the Congress as the 'supreme authority' respectively 'highest body'.

One feature can be observed: Beyond the General Assembly of IRB there is the Council which comprises representatives of Unions and Associations who comprise the committee that has the ultimate and supreme legislative authority with respect to the affairs of the Board. The Council consists of a chairman, a vice-chairman and 26 members (composition by continental zones, cf. bye-law 1.1, p. 19).

Delegates and distribution of votes (see below table 2)

The great majority of the federations allow their national member federations to send a maximum of two up to three delegates as representatives, but only one delegate of each federation is entitled to vote. In general the following applies: Each national member federation has one vote. Three federations, FIS, FISA and IIHF, have special features, because each of their member federation has at least one vote and at most three votes:

The member federations of FIS get up to three votes if they have a particular number of members. In the Statutes it is stated that “each member association has at least one vote. There shall be one additional vote (in all two votes) for each Member Association having at least 10.000 members and fulfilling one of the following conditions:

- to have participated with competitors in the last World Ski Championships (Nordic or alpine) or
- to have organized during the preceding two years at least one international event each year, included in the FIS Calendar.

There shall be two additional votes (in all three votes) for each Member Association having at least 50.000 members and fulfilling both of the above conditions” (A.17.2, p. 5).

At FISA members get up to three votes if they participate at World Rowing Championships:

“If a member federation fulfills the following conditions, it shall instead be entitled to three votes for a period of four years commencing 1st January of the year following the Olympic Games:

1. it has been a member of FISA for at least three years, and
2. it has competed at any of the following regattas:
 - a. World Rowing Championships;
 - b. World Rowing Junior Championships;
 - c. World Rowing Under 23 Championships;
 - d. Olympic or Paralympic qualification regattas;
 - e. Continental Games regattas with a total of at least 12 boats during the previous four year Olympic period.

The Council will notify all member federations of the voting entitlements of member federations by 31st December in the year of an Olympic Games (starting from 2009 and to be applied to voting from 2013)” (Part III.A. Article 35, p. 19).

Similar to the FISA members of the IIHF can get up to two votes if they participate at Ice Hockey World Championships:

“Full member national associations are entitled to a maximum of two votes. A full member national association in good standing is entitled to one vote.

A full member national association in good standing, whose national team has competed in three consecutive IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships (Senior Men category) immediately preceding or taking place concurrently with the Congress, is entitled to two votes” (34.1, pp.18-19).

Table 2: Delegates and distribution of votes

	FIBA	FIFA	FIS	FISA	IBU	IHF	IIHF	IJF	IRB	ITF	IWR F	IOC	IPC
Delegates (max.)	2	3	3	3	o	3	2	2	o	3	2	o	o
	o n/a												
Vote(s)	■	■	■ *	■ **	■	■	■ ***	■	■	■	■	■	■
Legend	■ each member (federation) has one vote * FIS: up to three votes, depending on the number of members of each national member federation and depending on participation at particular Championships ** FISA: up to three votes, depending on participation at World Rowing Championships *** IIHF: up to two votes, depending on participation at World Championships												

Source: Own representation

Ordinary and extraordinary Congresses and quorums for a session (see below table 3)

Ordinary Congresses take place either every year or once every two years. The IIHF distinguishes between a General Congress (June 2012 and every fourth year thereafter), an annual Congress (every year during the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship or where applicable at the time of the General Congress) and a semi-annual Congress (every year in autumn, cf. A.30, p. 17). In every federation an extraordinary Congress may be called on request.

Quorums for session of the Congress (see below table 3)

Only three of the selected federations specifically state that they do not have a quorum. The IHF, IIHF, IRB, ITF, IWRF and IOC have general quorums for their sessions of their respective Congresses which require at least 50 per cent attendance. Four federations feature only limited quorums: The FIFA-Statutes proclaim that “for a vote on an amendment to the Statutes to be valid, an absolute majority (half of the Members plus one Member) of the Members eligible to vote must be present” (26.3, p. 25). At FIS it is formulated: “The decision to dissolve the FIS requires a two-thirds majority of the valid votes and a quorum of at least two-thirds of the member associations” (21.4, p. 7). The IJF mentions a further restriction: “The Chairperson of the Congress may only declare the official opening of the Congress when at least one-third (1/3) of the Member National Federations are present or represented, and when at least three (3) different Continental Union representatives are present” (8.15, p. 9). And the Congress of the IPC “shall be competent to pass a resolution if at least one-third (1/3) of the members with voting rights are present. Should the number not be reached, a new Assembly may be called which shall be competent to make decisions regardless of the number of members present” (8.1, p. 7).

Table 3: Ordinary Congresses and quorums for a session of the Congress

	FIBA	FIFA	FIS	FISA	IBU	IHF	IIHF	IJF	IRB	ITF	IWRF	IOC	IPC
Ordinary Congress	■	▶	▶	▶	■	■	▶*	■	■	▶	■	▶	■
Legend	■ once every two years ▶ every year * IIHF: annual Congress, semi-annual Congress, quadrennial General Congress												
Quorums for a session	●	■*	■**	●	●	■	■	■***	■	■	■	■	■****
At least		51%*	2/3*			51%	75%	1/3***	51%	50%	51%	51%	1/3****
Legend	■ yes ● no quorum * FIFA: For a valid vote on an amendment to the Statutes ** FIS: For the decision to dissolve the FIS *** IJF: at least one-third of the member federations are present or represented, and when at least three different Continental Union representatives are present. **** IPC: Should the number not be reached, a new Assembly may be called which shall be competent to make decisions regardless of the number of members present.												

Source: Own representation

Votes, elections and decisions (see below table 4)

Almost all federations take their votes openly by show of hands or by show of cards. Only the IOC has votes by secret ballot. The majority of the federations offer a secret ballot if a voting member (the administrative committee or the chairman) requests to do so.

Six federations conduct ballots of elections secretly (FIBA, FIFA, FIS, IHF, IJF, IOC). The IBU and the ITF initially feature an open vote of elections. It is only on request that a secret ballot can be granted. There is one special regulation at the IHF: "If the number of nominations exceeds the number of offices, voting shall be by secret ballot" (12.5.5, p. 18).

Eleven of 13 federations demand that a majority of two-thirds respectively three-quarters of the votes cast are necessary to amend the Statutes. Regarding other decisions it is standardised that a simple majority of the votes cast are necessary.

The election of the President through the Congress is the same in every federation. The great majority stipulate that the Executive is elected by the Congress. But there are some exceptions: The members of the executive organ of the FIBA respectively of the FIFA are elected respectively appointed by the continental zones (15.1.6, p. 17; B.30.4, 28). The executive organ of the IRB is appointed by the Congress (respectively Council).

Table 4: Votes, elections and decisions

	FIBA	FIFA	FIS	FISA	IBU	IHF	IIHF	IJF	IRB	ITF	IWRF	IOC	IPC
Votes	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	○	○	■	○	●	○
	■ Votes are taken openly (by show of hands, by show of cards) ● Votes are taken by secret ballot * FIS, FISA, IBU, IGF, IHF, IIHF, ITF: secret ballot on request ○ n/a												
Elections	■	■	■	○	●	■*	○	■	○	●	○	■	○
	■ secret ballot ● open ballot, secret ballot on request * IHF: secret ballot if the number of nominations exceeds the number of offices. ○ n/a												
Amendments of Statutes	■	●	■	■	■	■	●	■*	○	■	○	■	■
	■ a majority of two-thirds of the votes cast is necessary ● a majority of three-quarters of the votes cast is necessary ○ n/a * IJF: delegates come from at least three different Continental Unions												
Other decisions	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	○	■	■
	■ Unless otherwise specified in the Statutes, decisions are taken by a simple majority of the votes cast.												
Election president	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	○	■	■	■	■
	■ Elected by the Congress ○ n/a												
Election "Executive"	●	●	■	■	■	■	■	■	●	■	■	■	■
	■ Elected by the Congress ● Elected/ appointed by the continental Confederation/ Union/ Association												

Source: Own representation

Executive committees

Terms of executive

Similar to the Congress it is necessary to introduce the different terms for the 'Executive'. The FIS, FISA, IHF and IIHF names the Executive 'council and executive committee'. The FIFA, IJF and IRB have an 'executive committee'. The FIBA has a 'central board', the IBU an 'executive board', the IOC an 'executive board', the IPC a 'governing board', the IWRF and ITF have a 'board of directors'.

Members, vote and composition (see below table 5)

The lowest numbers of members of the Executive are eight of the IWRF and nine of the IRB. 25 members belong to the FIFA, followed by the FIBA with 20 members and the IJF

with 19 to 22 members. For every federation the following applies: Each member of the executive organ has one vote.

The great majority of the federations have the same structure: There is a president, up to eight vice-presidents and 'other members'. One exception is the IRB because this federation has, instead of a president and a vice-president, a chief-officer and an officer.

Differences appear in the composition of the 'other members': The federations of FIBA, FIFA, FISA, IHF, IJF, IRB and ITF demand that at least one of their members comes from every continental zones (Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania).

The FIBA and FIFA order to have at least one woman in the Executive: The FIBA-Statutes state that "both genders must be represented on the Central Board and each Zone must designate at least one person of each gender" (15.1.5, p. 17).

The two federations responsible for disabled people, the IWRF and the IPC, require one athlete representative. The IPC-governing board consists of "the Chairperson of the Athletes' Council, ex-officio member with vote, elected by the Athletes' Council" (5.1, p. 4). In the IWRF the athlete representative must be an active player.

The Statutes of the IJF allow the president to compose "a list of ten to twelve members who are authorized by their National Federations to be on list" (11.2, p. 12). The FIS and the IOC show no specific features.

Table 5: Members, vote and composition

	FIBA	FIFA	FIS	FISA	IBU	IHF	IJF	IRB	ITF	IWRF	IOC	IPC	
Members total	20	25	17	11	9	19	13	19-22	9	14	8	15	13
President	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	(1)	1	1	1	1	
Vice-president	7	8	4	1	8	6	3	(1)	0	1	4	1	
Other members	12	16	12	9	0	12	9	13-16	7	13	6	10	11
Composition	■ ►	■ ►	○	■	*	■	■	**	■	■	●	○	●
Legend	■ representatives of continental zones ► representative(s) of both genders ● representative(s) of athletes ○ n/a * IBU: 7 vice-presidents for finances, sport, marketing, information, development, medical issues, special projects) ** IJF: president composes a list of members												

Source: Own representation

This status quo provides an overview about the 13 international federations with regard to the legislative and the executive organ. With the help of several categories especially the distributions of votes, elections, decisions and the composition of each organ has been

described. This leads to the following questions: How valuable are additional votes in the Congress of federations of FIS, FISA and IIHF? Which topics do the Congress and the Executive vote on? Are the votes consensual or majority-oriented? Further investigations can build on this empirical work.

The alternatives? Scenarios for democratic reform in decision-making in international sport organizations

Weighting of votes: Lessons from the European Union and the IMF

Egalitarianism and power come into conflict in all types of political interactions but international bodies face it most severely. Considering sport differences become apparent when comparing the number of registered players in football. While there are 6,3 million registered players in the German Football Association and 4,18 million in the US Soccer Federation, the British Virgin Island counts just 435 registered players and Montserrat not more than 200 players. However, each association has one vote in the FIFA Congress.

In view of the tremendous differences in size (and financial support) it has been demanded to establish a system that recognizes the greater power and contribution of larger members while preserving some influence for smaller ones by a weighting of votes.²³ A particularly important and timely example for the weighting of votes is the Council of Ministers of the European Union, the most decisive decision-making body of the European Union. The EU Council consists of a single representative from each country in the European Union. While usually every member has one vote in ordinary voting procedures in international organisations, the EU Council of Ministers has established with the Nice Treaty a new system with weighted votes. For instance, Germany holds in the Council currently 29 votes while the Netherlands have 13 and Malta has 3 votes. The weights are less than proportional to population size and the threshold is relatively high (73.9 percent).

The scale of the system has implications on the formal and informal workings of the system what has been broadly considered by academic literature on the European Union. Based on academic approaches measuring power, such as the Shapley-Shubik (1954) or the Banzhaf (1965) indices have been discussed. In addition of measuring things such as the relative probabilities that different voters are essential also the democratic impact of the weighing of votes has been considered.

Transferring the approach of weighting of votes to international sport organisations may improve their democratic quality as well as reducing such dark sides as corruption and vote buying. While the representation of smaller member associations is still guaranteed their voting power will be (slightly) reduced. One important conclusion of academic analysis is that the optimal weighting of votes and the thresholds can be derived separately. The optimal weight of a country's vote depends on the size of the population

²³ A weighted voting system is characterized by the number of voters, the weights (the number of votes under control) and the quota (the threshold to pass a motion).

and the distribution of preferences within a country relative to other countries while the threshold depends on the bias of preferences in terms of the intensity in favor of the status quo compared to change (Baberà and Jackson, 2006, p. 318).

Voting by count and account (double majority)

Voting by count and account is defined as follows: When a decision is taken, two calculations will be made: The first one is based on the number of (individual) voters/supporters while the second one is the sum of their weights. A country's or association's "weight" is some pre-agreed-upon objective quantity, most likely its number of members or "account", but possibly its contribution to the organisation's resources. A motion passes only if it attains a majority by *both* count and account.

This system takes account of some advantages but also disadvantages: An advantage is the simplicity of the procedure: in general it is easy to negotiate. Another advantage is that it avoids many of the unintended consequences of other methods, which, in spite of their purpose, sometimes may increase the inequity. A disadvantage can be seen in the efficiency of decision-making. Though decisions might easily be negotiated it will take higher costs to achieve the threshold required due to the two standards.

New distribution of competences: Participation in executive committees

Participation and representation have become core issues in political debates on democracy not just because of the growing attractiveness of the concept but also due to the awareness that projects are more successful when those most affected by the political decisions participate directly in its design and operation. The logic behind this approach is that participation in decision-making leads to a sense of "ownership" and "accountability". Participation requires more than formal involvement in an international institution. It requires that affected parties have access to decision-making procedures in order to contribute meaningfully to the work of the institution. By doing so, they will be made (more) accountable and realise the direct effects of the decisions – both in terms of success and failure.

Based on this logic, the participation of national associations has to be enhanced. For instance every FIFA member should have a right to vote on the major decisions affecting the international game, in particular the decision on where the FIFA World Cup is held. At the moment this decision is just given to a handful of members represented in the Executive Committee (or the respective Councils) while the vast majority is not represented yet.

Incorporating the logics of a two chamber-system

Usually international organisations consist just of one chamber. Multi-cameral institutions combine the representation of diverse interests in groups or 'chambers' with the unanimous aggregation of chambers' majority votes. In order to make use of the advantages of a two chamber system a system of checks and balances is considered as an adequate alternative to a single chamber system. In addition to this, a new balance might enhance the representation of the individual stake holders of each association. The representation in a second chamber might include stake holders such as:

- leagues
- clubs
- athletes or players
- supporters

Conclusions

Summing up the various aspects discussed in this chapter gives an idea about severe consequences that to be expected. Substantial reforms may lead to a less coherent system even a less efficient one but also to sport organisations that will act on a basis that is more fair and democratic and that might also contribute to an improved way of representation. In any democratic organisation in which the members are of different sizes and compositions, it makes sense to weight the votes of the representatives. The optimal weight of a country's vote depends on the size of the population and the distribution of preferences within a country relative to other countries. Conflicting negotiations and bargaining processes might be necessary until such a new system will be implemented.

Summary of recommendations

1. International sport organisations should establish a system of weighting of votes that becomes the regular procedure in decision-making.
2. In order to find a compromise between transparency, democracy and efficiency international sport organisations should institute a double majority system at both the level of the Congress and the Executive Committees. Decisions would require the requisite majorities of both the number of individual members (associations) and their voting weight. The thresholds for decision should be equal for both types of majorities. The respective quorum should be a matter of further discussions. While some decisions may be taken by simple majority other decisions – in particular those with financial implications might need a super majority referring to 70% or 80% of (weighted) votes.
3. A change of the voting systems should be accompanied by other modifications such as enhancing the competencies of the assemblies/parliaments of international sport organisations e.g. Congress and Session.
4. Academic studies on international sport organisations should be increased. There is an urgent need for more empirical evidence in order to address the following questions: Does international sport organisations' formal decision-making rules matter? Do they constrain, or simply reflect, power? And if they do matter and if they do have effects: what kind of changes is necessary in order to assure democracy in international sport organisations.

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Statutes 2011: http://www.iwrf.com/resources/iwrf_docs/IWRF_Statutes_and_Bylaws-2011.pdf
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