Autonomy in National Olympic Committees

An autonomy index
NOCs and governments

• ‘Sports governance’ → discussions about the autonomy of sport

• But what does it mean to be autonomous?

• Are NOCs politically autonomous in relation to their national governments?

  ▪ Is it possible to map formal relationships between NOCs and national governments?
An index on autonomy – why?

Olympic Charter, Article 27 and 28:

- “[...] NOCs may cooperate with governmental bodies”.
- “[...] an NOC may decide, at its discretion, to elect as members representatives of such authorities,” (e.g. government).
- “The NOCs must preserve their autonomy and resist all pressures of any kind, including but not limited to political, legal, religious or economic pressures which may prevent them from complying with the Olympic Charter.”
An index on autonomy – how?

- Extent to which NOC executives hold parallel positions
- 205 surveyed NOCs
- Presidents and Secretary Generals
- Selection criteria:
  a) Highly ranked government official or part of the ruling cabinet
  b) Member of a ruling family
- Self-reported CVs from ANOC database
Results: NOCs led by individuals with formal ties to government
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Figure 2. NOCs led by individuals with formal ties to a national government (%)
NOCs and degrees of political freedom

Figure 8. Freedom House scores in national Olympic confederation countries

Note: Mean freedom scores are based on data from 2017. The scores determine whether countries are Free (1.0 to 2.5), Partly Free (3.0 to 5.0), or Not Free (5.5 to 7.0).
Summary of results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage of NOCs connected to government bodies</th>
<th>Mean freedom score in affected countries</th>
<th>Mean freedom score in the region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa (ANOCA)</td>
<td>7.4 %</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia (OCA)</td>
<td>36.4 %</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America (PASO)</td>
<td>7.3 %</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe (EOC)</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania (ONOC)</td>
<td>11.8 %</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All regions</td>
<td>14.1 %</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages show the proportion of NOC leaders connected to government bodies within the specified region.
An index on autonomy – implications?

Olympic Charter, Article 28:

- “[...] NOCs must preserve their autonomy and resist all pressures of any kind”.
- Is the autonomy of NOCs led by individuals who also represents a national government, an illusion?
- Potential risks of political interference in affected NOCs
- Measures to reduce potential conflict of interest risks?
Thank you!

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The complete analysis and survey of the autonomy of National Olympic Committees is available on: www.playthegame.org