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A review of good governance principles and indicators in sport

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Abstract

In order to help sports organisations and intergovernmental organisations to find a way through the numerous good governance narratives, this contribution, exploratory in nature, catalogues and reviews a selection of the most significant and recent sets of principles and indicators of good governance in sport published at the international level. With the help of six criteria, it reviews the nine following sets: Recommendation Rec(2005)8 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the principles of good governance in sport; Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance of the Olympic and Sports Movement (BUPs); Guidelines for Good Governance in Grassroots Sport; Deliverable 2 - Principles of good governance in sport; Key Governance Principles and Basic Indicators; Declaration of Berlin; Basic Indicators for Better Governance in International Sport (BIBGIS): An assessment tool for international sport governing bodies; Sports Governance Observer; Declaration of Core Principles on Sport Integrity - Good governance.

Introduction

Due to recent and recurring high-profile corruption scandals, International Sports Organisations (ISOs) are put increasingly under public scrutiny. In order to reduce the risk of other possible unethical behaviour, restore public trust, and maintain their autonomy, ISOs are expected to respect good governance principles such as transparency, integrity, control, accountability, or democracy.

At the international level, however, there is no generally accepted good governance code or standard which would have been adopted by a wide-ranging group of sports organisations (International Olympic Committee, International Sports Federations, umbrella sports federations, etc.) and supported by their numerous stakeholders. Since the early 2000s, this particular situation, *inter alia*, led to the publication of almost 50 sets of good governance principles and indicators by intergovernmental organisations (Council of Europe, European Union, etc.), sports organisations (International Olympic Committee, Union Cycliste Internationale, German Olympic Sports Confederation, Association of Summer Olympic International Federations, European Olympic Committees, etc.), non-governmental organisations (Transparency International, Play the Game, etc.), and scholars (see, for example, Chappellet & Mrkonjic, 2013 and Maennig, 2015). Furthermore, ISOs usually have to comply with multiple forms of compliance systems and regulatory environments including general legal principles, their own Statutes and regulations, the Olympic Charter, the World-Anti Doping Code or the mandatory laws of a country (Mavromati, 2014), which can include or refer to good governance principles and indicators (for example, term limits).

Consequently, and due to the multidimensionality and permeability of the system in which ISOs evolve, their strategy and day-to-day operational activities can be directly or indirectly influenced by good governance recommendations. But the question arises as to whether the existence of a constellation of good governance narratives can effectively lead to a positive and measurable change within the targeted sports organisations for example, without diverting them from their original missions and main objectives.

Firstly, the imposition of universal prescriptions of sports governance (from the top) are neither appropriate nor effective as they often neglect the expression of organisational, political as well as cultural priorities at a local level (Ghadami & Henry, 2015). Secondly, as most of the sets are generally adapted from the corporate sector (see Handschin, 2014) and, therefore, advocate the virtues of control mechanisms (audits, compliance committee, risk management, etc.) and regulation, the recommendations are not always adapted to smaller sports organisations. These sets tend to neglect the high cost induced by the change (professionalising the structures, hiring more staff, etc.). Thirdly, the international sport system is so complex and reflects so many different realities, that the implementation of tailor-made approaches will strengthen particularisms and, therefore, undermine the idea of a harmonised and systematic monitoring and evaluation process from the top or by an independent body.

Building on these observations and in order to support sports organisations as well as intergovernmental organisations in finding a way through this conceptual and operational complexity, this contribution proposes to catalogue and review a selection of the most significant sets of principles and indicators of good governance in sport published at the international level.

In a first section we present six possible criteria which allow us to review the sets in a systematic way. In a second section we review nine sets of good governance principles and indicators in sport published by international sports organisations, intergovernmental organisations, researchers and non-governmental organisations. A summary of the main outcomes of the review concludes this contribution.

The criteria

1. Enforcement (EN)

Drawing on Hoye & Cuskelly, the first criterion measures: “the degree to which the various pressures on sport organisations to adopt good governance behaviours are able to be enforced” (2007, p. 170). The result depends on the type of organisation that has designed the set (research groups, change agents, governments, umbrella organisation, etc.) and the type of document in which good governance is referenced (programme, Statutes, code of ethics, declaration of intention, voluntary code, etc.).

This criterion gives an indication on the autonomy of sports organisation in adopting and implementing their own sets of good governance. *Enforcement* is measured with three possible degrees: low, average, high. From there, we assume that good governance is more likely to be implemented through statutory requirements (high level of enforcement) than through the recommendations of research groups or declarations of intergovernmental organisations (low level of enforcement) as the first often include compliance systems and sanctions.

2. Scope (SC)

The second criterion measures the “conceptual” scope of the set. *Scope* refers to the volume of good governance principles included in the set and is measured with three possible levels: narrow, moderate, broad. In a quantitative perspective, we assume that it is more likely that the target group will find less costly and more efficient to implement a rather limited number of recommendations than an exhaustive list of criteria.

3. Operationalisation (OP)

The third criterion measures the degree of operationalisation of the set. It informs on the number of levels of deconstruction proposed by the set, from an abstract concept or broad principles to measurable indicators including a scoring system. *Operationalisation* is measured with three possible degrees: low, average, high. It is assumed that the more the set is operationalised, the clearer the expectations are for the target group.

4. Structure (ST)

The fourth criterion measures whether the set is framed into a structured manner or not (key principles, main chapters, etc.). *Structure* is measured by two possible answers: yes or no. It is assumed that a structured set provides clearer expectations towards the behaviour of sports organisations.

5. Outreach (OU)

The fifth criterion measures the outreach of the set. It informs on the groups of stakeholders that are targeted by the set (all sports organisations, ISOs, national sports federations, National Olympic Committees, etc.). *Outreach* is measured by three possible levels: narrow, moderate, broad. It is assumed that the broader the target group is, the more difficult it will be to find solutions that meet the concrete needs and priorities of sports organisations.

6. Implementation (IM)

The sixth criterion measures whether the set recommends specific mechanisms (instruments, procedures, etc.) that would guarantee that the principles and the indicators are effectively and successfully implemented by the target group, for example the inception of a follow-up committee or a reporting system. As this criterion can potentially reveal complex frameworks which are outside the scope of this contribution, it is simply measured by two possible answers: yes or no.

The review

1. Council of Europe

Recommendation Rec(2005)8 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the principles of good governance in sport (2005)

In 2004, the Council of Europe is the first intergovernmental organisation to highlight the importance of good governance in sport. Among other beneficial impacts, it namely widens the popularity of sport, strengthens the autonomy of non-governmental sports organisations in civil society and promotes sport as a vehicle for participation, health as well as social and ethnic integration. The Recommendation follows the Resolution No. 1 on the principles of good governance in sport adopted in 2014 at the 10th Conference of European Ministers responsible for sport.

The recommendation defines good governance as: “a complex network of policy measures and private regulations used to promote integrity in the management of the core values of sport such as democratic, ethical, efficient and accountable sports activities” (Council of Europe, 2005, n.d.) It invites governments of member states to adopt effective policies and measures of good governance in sport which include the following minimum requirements: “democratic structures for non-governmental sports organisations based on clear and regular electoral; procedures open to the whole membership; organisation and management of a professional standard, with an appropriate code of ethics and procedures for dealing with conflicts of interest; accountability and transparency in decision-making and financial operations, including the open publication of yearly financial accounts duly audited; fairness in dealing with membership, including gender equality and solidarity” (Council of Europe, 2005, n.d.).

EN	SC	OP	ST	OU	IM
<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Broad</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Intergovernmental recommendation.</i>	<i>A few broad principles and a couple of key words.</i>	<i>The principles are not operationalised, but “the open publication of yearly financial accounts duly audited” might be considered as an indicator.</i>	<i>Four entries but no specific structure.</i>	<i>Governmental and non-governmental structures.</i>	<i>The Council of Europe recommends to governments to set up mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the principles.</i>
<i>Governments have to ensure that “good governance is integrated into sports policies and practices at national level”.</i>		<i>The set does not propose a scoring system.</i>			

The importance of good governance in sport is also highlighted in the Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the principle of autonomy of sport in Europe¹ as well as in the Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming in sport².

2. International Olympic Committee (IOC)

Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance of the Olympic and Sports Movement (BUPs) (2008)

The BUPs are elaborated and published in 2008 in the framework of a seminar on the autonomy of the Olympic and sport movement gathering 170 participants and organised two years after the landmark Meca-Medina ruling which questioned the autonomy of sports organisations. The principles are adopted by the members during the 2009 Olympic Congress in Copenhagen. Over the years, encouraging and supporting good governance has become one of the fundamentals principles of Olympism³ and one of the core roles of the IOC⁴.

¹ “ [...] use [the principle of autonomy] as the basis for setting up an equitable partnership between the public authorities and the sports movement, complementing the principles of good governance, to increase the transparency and democracy in sport following Recommendation CM/Rec(2005)8 on the principles of good governance in sport” (Council of Europe, 2011, p. 2).

² The governments of member states are invited to encourage sports organisations at all levels to: “apply good governance principles by ensuring on the one hand that substantive gender equality through gender mainstreaming is a part of each organisation’s strategy and, on the other hand, that they regularly report on the practices and results and disseminate them widely among the parties concerned” (Council of Europe, 2015, n.d.).

³ “Recognising that sport occurs within the framework of society, sports organisations within the Olympic Movement shall have the rights and obligations of autonomy, which include freely establishing and controlling the rules of sport, determining the structure and governance of their organisations, enjoying the right of elections free from any outside influence and the responsibility for ensuring that principles of good governance be applied” (International Olympic Committee, 2015, p. 13).

The BUPs propose seven broad principles: Vision, mission and strategy; Structures, regulations and democratic process; Highest level of competence, integrity and ethical standards; Accountability, transparency and control; Solidarity and development; Athletes’ involvement, participation and care; Harmonious relations with governments while preserving autonomy. Each principle is segmented into various themes (38) which often include a long list of elements to be considered (108). As such, the document does not propose proper indicators, but rather precise recommendations.

EN	SC	OP	ST	OU	IM
<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>No</i>
<p><i>Principles published by an international umbrella sports organisation.</i></p> <p><i>The BUPs are mentioned in the Code of Ethics (article 11).</i></p> <p><i>Good Governance is mentioned in the fifth fundamental principle of Olympism and the first mission of the IOC.</i></p>	<p><i>The BUPs are the most comprehensive and detailed set of principles of good governance in the sports industry.</i></p>	<p><i>The principles are operationalised into several elements to be considered.</i></p> <p><i>The set does not propose a scoring system.</i></p>	<p><i>Principles, themes, and elements to be considered.</i></p>	<p><i>Olympic and sport movement.</i></p>	<p><i>No detailed monitoring instruments or follow-up mechanism are proposed in the set.</i></p>

3. International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)

Guidelines for Good Governance in Grassroots Sport (2012)

The International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) is: “a global platform open to organisations working within the field of sport for all, recreational sports and physical activity” (International Sport and Culture Association, 2012, p. 30). In 2012, within the framework of the European Commission’s Preparatory Actions in the field of Sport and in collaboration with other key stakeholders such as Transparency International, ISCA publishes a comprehensive list of guidelines (GGGG) which aim to help sports leaders to better understand their role in good governance and to guide organisations in their desire and process to adhere to good governance in sport principles.

The association perpetuates the contribution of Sport New Zealand and defines good governance as: “the process by which the board sets strategic direction and priorities, sets policies and management

⁴ “The IOC’s role is [...] to encourage and support the promotion of ethics and good governance in sport as well as education of youth through sport and to dedicate its efforts to ensuring that, in sport, the spirit of fair play prevails and violence is banned” (International Olympic Committee, 2015, p. 18).

performance expectations, characterizes and manages risks, and monitors and evaluates organisational achievements in order to exercise its accountability to the organisation and owners” (International Sport and Culture Association, 2012, p. 35). It suggests four dimensions: Democracy; Transparency; Accountability; Inclusion of stakeholders.

EN	SC	OP	ST	OU	IM
<i>Low</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Guidelines published by an international umbrella sports organisation.</i>	<i>Four principles and 18 elements to consider.</i>	<i>The principles are operationalised into several elements that can be assimilated to indicators.</i>	<i>Principles and elements.</i>	<i>Sports leaders and organisations.</i>	<i>The GGGG proposes a systematic approach for implementation and compliance.</i>
<i>The guidelines aim to help and guide sports leaders and organisations.</i>		<i>The set per se does not propose a scoring system, but the self-assessment tool does.</i>			

4. EU Expert Group on Good Governance

Deliverable 2: Principles of good governance in sport (2013)

The Principles of good governance in sport have been published in 2013 by the EU Expert Group on Good Governance including representatives of several member states, sports organisations and sports NGOs which has been established on the basis of the Council Resolution on an EU Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014. The group believes that sports organisations that neglect the importance of good governance and do not implement such principles can expect their autonomy to be threatened.

Good governance is broadly defined as: “The framework and culture within which a sports body sets policy, delivers its strategic objectives, engages with stakeholders, monitors performance, evaluates and manages risk and reports to its constituents on its activities and progress including the delivery of effective, sustainable and proportionate sports policy and regulation” (European Commission, 2013, p. 5) and should be embraced voluntarily by the whole sports movement (i.e. sports organisations).

The set proposes 10 principles: Clarity of propose/objectives; Code of ethics; Stakeholder identification and roles; Democracy and minimum standards; Delegation and committees; Management; Judicial/disciplinary procedures; Inclusivity and youth engagement; Statutes, rules and regulations; Accountability and transparency). The principles are deconstructed into 40 “dimensions” which, in turn, are segmented into a considerable number of detailed items.

EN	SC	OP	ST	OU	IM
<i>Low</i>	<i>Broad</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Guidelines published by an intergovernmental organisation in collaboration with other stakeholders. It is the responsibility of the sports movement to implement the principles and detailed recommendations.</i>	<i>The set presents a broad approach of the concept including 10 principles and 40 detailed "dimensions".</i>	<i>The principles are operationalised into several items which (sometimes) can be assimilated to indicators. The set does not propose a scoring system.</i>	<i>Principles, dimensions, and elements.</i>	<i>Grassroots sports organisations, national sports governing bodies and national umbrella sports organisations, European and international federation.</i>	<i>Specific section on the implementation of the principles. The EU should encourage compliance but no detailed instruments or follow-up mechanism are proposed.</i>

5. ASOIF Governance Task Force

Key Governance Principles and Basic Indicators (2016)

The Key Governance Principles and Basic Indicators have been elaborated by the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) Governance Task Force (GTF) which has been given the responsibility to ensure that discussions on the topic of good governance that are taking place since 2012 are turned into concrete and measurable actions and to propose a self-assessment tool. The members acknowledge that many stakeholders have already published extensively on the topic, but that the proposed tools are too often adapted from the corporate sector and fail to take into consideration the specificities of ISOs. From there, the complex environment in which ISO evolve, their hybrid structure and the pyramid structure of sport are among a few contextual conditions that have to be taken into account in the reflection about a relevant and consistent good governance initiatives. The set proposes five principles: Transparency; Integrity; Democracy; Sports Development and solidarity; Control mechanisms. Each principle is measured by 10 indicators.

EN	SC	OP	ST	OU	IM
<i>Low</i>	<i>Broad</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Guidelines published by an international umbrella sports organisation. It is the responsibility of the sports organisations to include the recommendations in their Statutes, rules and regulations.</i>	<i>The set presents a broad approach of the concept including five principles and 50 indicators.</i>	<i>The principles are operationalised into indicators. The set does not propose a scoring system.</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>ASOIF Members.</i>	<i>Implementation of the set is discussed in the conclusions. Implementation should be performed on a case-by-case basis pertaining to the specificities of the members. The GTF will assist them in this process.</i>

6. United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture

Declaration of Berlin (2013)

The Declaration of Berlin has been adopted in the framework of the 5th International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS V) held in May 2013 in Berlin by 121 members. It is an outcome of a broad consultation process including key stakeholders from top-universities, sports organisations and public authorities. It includes 70 recommendations which have been prepared by three specific commissions: Access to Sport as a Fundamental Right for All; Promoting Investment in Physical Education and Sport Programmes; Preserving the Integrity of Sport. Good governance is mentioned in several recommendations related to the latter commission's work.

EN	SC	OP	ST	OU	IM
<i>Low</i>	<i>Narrow</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>The Declaration is published by an intergovernmental organisation.</i>	<i>Good governance refers to democratic structures, transparency and management of financial affairs.</i>	<i>The principles are not operationalised.</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>Federations and associations/clubs, sponsors and investors.</i>	<i>Follow-up committee.</i>

7. Chappelet & Mrkonjic

Basic Indicators for Better Governance in International Sport (BIBGIS): An assessment tool for international sport governing bodies (2013)

The authors start with the assumption that good governance is too context sensitive to be applied universally across all sport organisations and that it is due time to find a way to evaluate the governance of a given sport organisation which is based on empirical evidence and that can be improved over the years. Therefore, the aim of their working paper is to present a pragmatic tool for assessing the state of governance of ISOs. The set proposes seven broad dimensions: Organisational transparency; Reporting transparency; Stakeholders' representation; Democratic process; Control mechanisms; Sport integrity; Solidarity. Each principle is operationalised into nine measurable indicators.

EN	SC	OP	ST	OU	IM
<i>Low</i>	<i>Broad</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>"BIBGIS" is a set produced by researchers.</i>	<i>The set recommends seven dimensions and 63 indicators.</i>	<i>The set proposes indicators and a scoring system based on a transparent methodology.</i>	-	<i>International Sports Organisations.</i>	-

8. Geeraert

Sports Governance Observer (2015)

The Sports Governance Observer (SGO) is a measurement/benchmarking tool that has been developed and published by Play the Game in collaboration with the University of Leuven. The tool is one of the many outcomes of a research project funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Preparatory actions in the field of sport and gathering six European universities (AGGIS project). The aims of the tool are twofold. Firstly, it aims to assess the degree of good governance of a selection of international sports federations (Olympic sports) and highlight their main strengths and weaknesses in order to propose solutions for reform. Secondly, it also aims to analyse the conceptual and operational issues related to the application of a measurement tool to a large group of organisations.

The set proposes four dimensions: Transparency; Democratic processes; Checks and balances; Solidarity. Each dimension is segmented into numerous indicators (36) and a "qualitative" scoring system measuring the degree of fulfilment of an indicator (not fulfilled at all - weak - moderate - good - state of the art).

EN	SC	OP	ST	OU	IM
<i>Low</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>The SGO is produced by change agents / stakeholders.</i>	<i>The set recommends four dimensions and 36 indicators.</i>	<i>The set proposes a comprehensive scoring system based on a transparent methodology.</i>	-	<i>International Olympic Sports Federations.</i>	-

9. Sport Integrity Global Alliance

Declaration of Core Principles on Sport Integrity - Good governance (2016)

The Declaration of Core Principles on Sport Integrity has been published by a coalition (Sport Integrity Global Alliance) involving a wide-ranging group of stakeholders representing different sectors of the sports industry, namely national Olympic committees, intergovernmental organisations, professional football leagues, and consulting firms and committed to using best practice, universal standards and creative global solutions to usher a new era in the governance and integrity of sport.

By acknowledging the governance and reputational challenges that sport is currently facing, the Declaration recognises and supports the need for reforms in the integrity and governance of sport. With Financial Integrity and Sports Betting Integrity, Good governance is one of the three areas covered by the Declaration.

EN	SC	OP	ST	OU	IM
<i>Low</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Broad</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>The Declaration is produced by potential change agents / stakeholders.</i>	<i>The Declaration contains five broad standards and an important number of key words.</i>	<i>The principles are not operationalised into measurable indicators.</i>	<i>The principles do not follow a specific structure.</i>	<i>Sporting Sector.</i>	-
<i>Good governance is "endorsed and encouraged".</i>		<i>The Declaration does not propose a scoring system.</i>			

Conclusions

This contribution catalogued and reviewed nine sets of governance principles and indicators in sport with the help of six possible criteria. Due to the lack of a harmonised approach and coercive enforcement with regards to good governance in sport, the results reveal several differences, namely in terms of scope and degrees of operationalisation.

It is hoped that this review can help sports organisations and public authorities to evaluate and understand a few external conditions that can lead to the successful implementation of a good

governance framework. The analysis should be further developed. It could propose more criteria (for example, independence, legitimacy, or validity), compare more sets, and gather detailed information and concrete insights from sports organisations themselves.

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