

A FRAMEWORK TO ASSESS EUROPEAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEES' GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

Aim of abstract

National Olympic Committees (NOCs), face increasing expectations from their stakeholders (e.g., International Olympic Committee (IOC); European Union (EU); State government) to improve the way they are managed and governed. They are required to fulfill different national and international regulations and this could be considered a challenge. This paper aims to identify key factors in order to analyze the governance of the 27 European National Olympic Committees (ENOC). The goal is to help a better understanding of what their governance refers to in their specific context. For that purpose, we highlight key factors of governance adapted in the European Olympic context. The latter will provide researchers and practitioners with a framework to assess the governance of National Olympic Committees.

Theoretical background

The concept of governance has first been developed in the For-Profit Organization (FPO) context. The Cadbury's report (1992) gives a definition of governance as the system by which the companies are directed and controlled. In the Olympic Movement, awareness for a better and transparent governance raised just after the Salt Lake City scandal in 1998. At the same time, the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA, 2001) developed a report regarding good principles of governance in the non-profit sport sector. Improvement of management behaviors in Non-Profit Sport Organizations (NPSOs) was emerging.

However, a paradox still exists for NOCs. Indeed, the Olympic Charter (2010) stipulates on the one hand that "all NOCs must preserve their autonomy and resist all pressures of any kind [...] which may prevent them from complying with the Olympic Charter". On the other hand, it underlines that "NOCs may cooperate with governmental

bodies, with which they shall achieve harmonious relations". Furthermore, EU recognizes Sport since the Lisbon Treaty (2009), by the introduction of article number 165 on Sport. ENOCs have thus to deal with paradoxical requirements from the Olympic Charter as well as with new recommendations from the EU. Therefore, relations between ENOCs and their various stakeholders are considered to be crucial in understanding their governance. Consequently, we focus on the "communication" and "relation" aspects and put the following specific definition of governance applied to sport forward:

The organization and the management of best proceeding to allow the optimization of relational and communicational aspects between the different stakeholders of a sport organization on perpetual evolution in a complex and changing environment. (Charreaux, 1997, 2005; FIA, 2001; Arnaut, 2006; IOC 2010).

This definition is complementary to the vision developed by researchers on the governance of (Olympic) Sport Organizations (Chaker, 2004; Chapelet, 2010).

Key factors of governance for ENOC's

We highlighted several factors accordingly to the literature on governance of FPO, Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) and NPSOs. We then selected nine key factors, which are particularly relevant for Olympic Sport Organizations. Moreover, we developed specific criteria to measure each factor: (1) Ethic and corporate social responsibility (e.g. presence of an ethical charter within the NOC), (2) Equity and democracy (e.g. balanced representation of gender within the board of an NOC), (3) Relationship transparency (e.g. the free access to information), (4) Power (e.g. presence of an organizational charter defining specific roles), (5) Performance (e.g. using a balanced score card with performance indicators), (6) Collaboration (e.g. open-mindedness of NOCs concerning expectations of new stakeholders), (7) Communication (e.g. good exchange of information between NOCs and stakeholders), (8) Autonomy (e.g. degree of independency for a NOC regarding main stakeholders) and (9) knowledge transfert (e.g. versatility of members within a NOC). We assume that these factors are crucial for assessing and enhancing governance of ENOCs in terms of communication and relation.

Discussion and next steps

The factors of Olympic Sport Organizations governance we highlighted would give the ENOCs an opportunity to meet the expectations of their main stakeholders (IOC, EU and State government). We suggest to name the governance framework presented in this paper, dealing with relation and communication, such as "relational governance". Assessment of the governance of Olympic Sport Organizations might be facilitated thanks to criteria for each factor. This framework would also serve as a reference for actors in ENOCs who could focus on key specific elements to develop performing sport governance in line with the expectations of their stakeholders.

A semi-structured discussion with experts involved in a focus group (Morgan, 1996) is the next step of our research. It aims to strengthen the relevance of the criteria we targeted for each factor (1), to examine the perception of key actors in the Olympic movement (I.O.C., E.U., ENOCs) (2) and to enhance knowledge and develop new

hypotheses (3).

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