

## CO-HOSTING AN OLYMPIC EVENT: LESSONS LEARNED FROM EYOF 2015

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All authors:

Elsa Kristiansen (corresp), Anna-Maria Strittmatter, Berit Skirstad

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Synopsis:

This investigation shed light on the structure of co-host an event, the actors involved and the challenges and advantages that the co-host Organizing Committee (OC) met when organizing, implementing and evaluating the EYOF. The OC members had to deal with an increasing number of small stakeholders, and perceived transportation, housing, logistics, venues (9 venues in two countries) and volunteers as challenges. The finances were a particular problem as Austria and Liechtenstein have different currencies (Euro and CHF). We find the co-hosting of the EYOF as a good model for future Olympic hosts due to advantages encouraged by the Olympic Movement such as cost-reduction, strengthening the community and cross-border relations.

Abstract:

### INTRODUCTION

In January 2015 the 12th European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) was arranged in Voralberg (Austria) and Liechtenstein. It was the first-ever Olympic event to be co-hosted by two countries and consequently had a supervisory board with representatives of both the Austrian Olympic Committee and the Olympic Committee of Lichtenstein. This co-host approach is pioneering in the history of Olympic events and fits right in the International Olympic Committee (IOC)'s renewal of the Olympic Movement with the Agenda 2020 (IOC, 2014). This investigation aims to identify the challenges and advantages the co-hosted Organizing Committee (OC) had to relate to. As part of the analysis and as proposed by Clarkson (1995) or Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997), the study identifies and differentiates between primary and secondary stakeholders based on their level of influence on the planning and organisation of the event.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework is based on a stakeholder approach. Stakeholder theory allows for descriptive, instrumental, and normative analyses of the stakeholders, that is, the various individuals, groups and organizations that

affect or are impacted by the actions of a focal organization. Hanstad and colleagues have previously demonstrated that using a stakeholder approach helped to organize, analyse and develop an understanding of Youth Olympic Games compared to Olympic Games (Hanstad, Parent, & Kristiansen, 2013). We use stakeholder theory to a) differentiate between primary and secondary stakeholders involved with the co-hosting OC, and b) to analyse the challenges and advantages that the OC met during this event.

#### METHODOLOGY

We used a qualitative approach, and six members of the Organization Committee and one National Olympic Committee representative were interviewed, as well as observations (two authors were present) and document analyses were conducted. Data were compared through content analysis, a process for systematically analyzing all types of messages, and specifically pattern matching was used. We used the identified stakeholders from previous research as a starting point in the analysis (Hanstad et al., 2013). The researchers read and coded the raw material in main categories guided by topics from the interview guide and elaborated subcategories.

#### RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The opening ceremony focused on “two nations and two different mind-sets”. Two national songs were played, two official openers etc., and artists from both sides of the border contributed. The closeness between the two countries separated by mountains was obvious when present; hence, it was also pertinent as organisational challenges for the dual host organization which were mentioned with a smile in the opening ceremony.

As an event owned by the European Olympic Committee and not IOC, the 2015 EYOF Organizing Committee had a scaled down budget and no technical manuals to structure their work. Hence, they had the opportunity to choose innovative solutions that promoted the local communities for accommodation and choice of sponsors – so both countries felt equally benefitted. The OC used an open tactic to get the local sponsors, local companies and local community involved in order to create a legacy and an enthusiasm for the project. This further meant that the OC members had to deal with an increasing number of small stakeholders compared to IOC organized events, and that the local communities turned out to be core or primary stakeholders. The event had the same stakeholders as YOG (Hanstad et al., 2013), but their importance was reduced which will be discussed further. The media and the sponsors were of little influence contrary to the Olympic Games where they are primary stakeholders. The major challenges in co-hosting were the coordination and administration of two currencies, transportation (some athletes had a two hour drive from hotel to venue), accommodation (32 hotels and no Olympic Village), and volunteer issues (mostly local). The finances were a particular problem as not only have Austria and Liechtenstein different currencies (Euro and CHF), but additionally Liechtenstein is not a member of the European Union, custom issues had to be taken into account.

EYOF as an international event might not have international influence, but it had a sustainable impact on the communities and left a legacy of cooperation between the two countries caused by the co-host organization. Hence, the co-hosting of the EYOF is a good model for future Olympic hosts due to advantages encouraged by the Olympic Movement such as cost-reduction, strengthening the community and cross-border relations. As well, the use of existing venues and skilled personnel will make it possible for smaller countries

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to stage Olympic events.

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