

Play the Game Special Workshop: Good Governance and Tools for Change in Sport

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National Sports Governance Observer: Benchmarking Governance in National Sport Organisations - The Examples of Denmark and Norway.

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Aim

Good governance has climbed to the top of the international sports agenda in recent years. Corruption and mismanagement scandals in international sports organisations have urged public actors and the sports movement to increase their efforts for better sports governance. The aim of this paper is to benchmark governance in national sports organisations in Denmark and Norway using the standardised National Sport Governance Observer and further discuss these findings.

Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Sports organisations in Denmark and Norway are voluntary organisations. Based on Camy et al. (2004) and Henry (2009) the Danish and the Norwegian sport systems can be classified as missionary configurations. This is a system where the voluntary sector, on which the national sports organisations are included, to a large degree are independent and act with, delegated powers. However, it is important to underline that the missionary model is an ideal type and that there are elements and/or an increasing pressure present from other configurations.

Research Design and Data Analysis

To be able to benchmark the national sport organisations a tool named National Sport Governance Observer is developed. The tool consists in total 274 indicators of good governance where the federations score either 1 or 0 on a given indicator. The indicators are dispersed over four good governance dimensions that emerge from the relevant academic literatures, namely transparency, democratic processes, internal accountability and control, and societal responsibility. Dependent on how the organisations perform, they receive a total score (very good, good, moderate, weak, and not fulfilled) and an aggregated score within each of the dimensions.

A sample of eight federations in each country, seven national sports federations and the umbrella organisations, were selected to be benchmarked based on the National Sport Governance Observer methodology. The sample consist of five compulsory sports (athletics, football, handball, swimming and tennis) and three optional for national considerations. For the Danish part of the study, gymnastics, triathlon and the umbrella organisation were included while the Norwegian part includes equestrian sports, skiing and the umbrella organisation. The data collection followed the standardised National Sport Governance

Observer data collection process, which includes six steps, and the Danish data were collected during the period June 2017 to January 2018 while the Norwegian data were collected January to June 2018. The process consisted of desk research via the federations' websites and structured interviews with representatives from each of the federations.

Results and Discussion

The average National Sport Governance Observer index for the Danish federations is 65%, which constitutes 'good'. There are couple of reasons why Danish federations score high. Firstly, there has been a discussion about elements of good governance within the umbrella organisation since the late 1990's and since 2010; all 62 federations need to implement a code of conduct. Secondly, there are governmental policies within areas such as combat on doping and matching fixing and policies on elite sport. Thirdly, in the framework agreement between the Ministry of Culture and the umbrella organisation there are elements of good governance included. Together this result in an environment where the federations through own initiatives and legal framework deal with good governance issues. The average National Sport Governance Observer index for the Norwegian federations is 79%. This constitutes a good score, and seems high compared to other European countries. Over years, NIF has developed tools for federations and clubs to use in order to achieve good governance. This is visible in this material as all organisations overall seems to follow the same pattern. One interesting finding seems to be that all surveyed Danish and Norwegians sports organisations have some shortcomings within the democratic process dimension. We discuss this in light of the Nordic sports models and missionary configurations, and the growing professionalisation over the last two to three decades.

Conclusion and Implications

Based on the National Sport Observer benchmarking tool, the surveyed sports federations in Denmark and Norway receive high scores, and the governance of sport in both countries are good. Still, there are to be discussed whether the both sports systems at some areas are challenged by bureaucratic and entrepreneurial forces.

References

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