

The Length of Electoral Terms in National Sport Governing Bodies

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Aim

One typical feature of National Sport Governing Bodies is their democratic structure (Heinemann, 2004). At least the board of these National Sport Governing Bodies is elected by the members of the organization or their delegates. In many countries it is compulsory by law that these organizations have to define the details of their election procedures in their statutes. What we do not have to date is a systematic analysis of the length of the electoral terms of National Sport Governing Bodies which seems to be relevant under the aspects of democratic accountability on the one side and economic effectiveness and efficiency.

To deal with this gap the following research questions will be discussed: What is the range and distribution of the length of electoral terms in National Sport Governing Bodies? How can the differences in the length of electoral terms be explained?

Theoretical Background and Literature Review

The length of electoral terms shapes the behaviour of political representatives (Bernauer, et al., 2013). Comparing political systems Dal Bó and Rossi (2011) shows that the electoral terms vary between 6 years and less than 3 years. Empirically longer electoral terms lead to more productivity and long-term outcome orientation of the elected representatives (Dal Bó & Rossi, 2011).

There are some potential explanations of the differences between the length of the electoral terms for National Sport Governing Bodies. On the one hand it can be expected that larger organizations with more members will use longer electoral terms compared to smaller organizations with less members. On the other hand it can be expected that Olympic Sport Governing Bodies will orient their length of the electoral term on the four year-rhythm of the Olympic Games so that this length is expected to occur more often in Olympic Sport Governing Bodies compared to Non-Olympic Sport Governing Bodies.

Methodology and Data Analysis

The empirical analysis builds upon the statutes of National Sport Governing Bodies in Austria. The content of the statutes was processed using LimeSurvey and the analysis was done using SPSS.

Results and Discussion

The majority of the National Sport Governing Bodies have a length of their electoral term of 4 years (50%). In nearly one third of the National Sport Governing Bodies the length of the electoral term is 3 years (30%), in around 15% of these organizations it is 2 years and nearly 5% of the National Sport Governing Bodies elect their representatives for the board every year.

Regarding the findings of the literature presented above it is expected that this will have effects on the quality of the organizations outcome. On the one hand longer electoral terms imply a democratic deficit because the power of the members is weakened. This goes hand in

hand with a strengthening of the elected representatives which on the other hand implies the potential to strengthen the effectivity and efficiency of the National Sport Governing Bodies. Regarding to the expected reasons for the differences in the length of the electoral terms there is no empirically significant relationship between the size of National Sport Governing Bodies and the length of the electoral term. For the second expectation – the relationship between Olympic and Non-Olympic Sport Governing Bodies and the length of the electoral terms – there is a significant relationship. In Olympic Sport Governing Bodies nearly two thirds have a length of the electoral term of 4 years compared to Non-Olympic Sport Governing Bodies where this can be found in only 26% of the cases. This indicates a stronger orientation of Olympic Sport Governing Bodies on effectivity and efficiency than on democratic responsibility.

From a management perspective longer electoral terms are worthwhile whereas from a political perspective shorter election terms are more favourable. This results in an area of conflict that each organization has to solve and for which each organization has to develop its specific governance architecture to cope with it. One solution would be the implementation of a dual board system in which the second board has the function of a supervisory body for the elected board between the general meetings.

Conclusion and Implications

In this paper empirical insights into the length of electoral terms of National Sport Governing Bodies were presented. It is shown that there is a variety in the length of the electoral terms that can partly be explained through the Olympic status of the National Sport Governing Body. Future research should address the effects of the different length of the electoral terms on the behaviour of the representatives on the one side and on the outcome of the decision making in the board and the accountability of the board as well as on mechanisms of checks and balances that are implemented especially in those organizations with longer electoral terms on the other side in more depth.

References

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