

National Sports Governance Observer: Benchmarking sports governance across national boundaries

Project goals

The main aim of **SGO 2017: 'National Sports Governance Observer: Benchmarking sports governance across national boundaries'** is to assist and inspire national sports organisations to raise the quality of their governance practices.

The project involves in the first instance the partners included in the Erasmus+ application (see below) and will try to attach partners from third countries inside and outside the EU in the course of 2017 and 2018.

More specifically, the project sets out to

- enable sports leaders and outside stakeholders to measure, discuss and amend the governance standards and practices of sports organisations by adapting and applying the Sports Governance Observer benchmarking tool in national sports organisations.
- establish sustainable networks between academics, practitioners and other key stakeholders with a common interest in good governance in sport at a national as well as international level through national training workshops and the Play the Game conference.
- educate and train sports leaders, researchers, and government representatives to understand, introduce, evaluate, and sustain good governance standards and practices in their respective organisations.
- provide government officials with knowledge and tools that enable them to engage in dialogue with the sports movement with a view to inspiring better governance in sport and creating a robust framework for sport's use of public grants.
- produce, provide and disseminate national as well as comparative international and national data based on the Sports Governance Observer tool and the 'Sports Governance Observer 2015' report.
- initiate public debates on sports governance to a wider public in order to raise the awareness of the topics and challenges related to good governance among athletes, sports volunteers, association leaders, fan groups, sponsors and policy makers, thus enabling them to create more efficient organisations and engage in the debate about and decision-making processes in sport.

Methodology and target groups

The 'National Sports Governance Observer' follows a four-stage methodology, which includes (1) establishing, sustaining and nurturing domestic networks of public authorities and sport stakeholders (2) the developing and application of the national version of the 'Sports Governance Observer', (3) the exchange and dissemination of good practices, and (4) monitoring.

The target groups are:

- elected and employed sports officials in national sports federations (one sports discipline) and national confederations (umbrella organisations for more disciplines), in the following referred to simply as federations,
- external stakeholders and policy makers with relevance for the sports community in the European countries,
- employees of ministries, local administration and public institutions with relation to sport,
- expert academics and non-academic researchers (for instance journalists),
- the wider public as it can be reached via media contacts, fan groups, stakeholder groups and the communication platforms run in the first instance by Play the Game/Idan and secondarily by the project partners.

Background and relevance

With constantly accelerating speed, the issue of good governance in sport has climbed to the top of the EU sports political agenda over the past few years. Not only have specific case stories and police actions against international sports federations drawn worldwide public and political attention, there is also a growing awareness that the failures of international sports governance are longlasting and systemic.

This realisation comes at a time when the European and international sports sectors are subject to great changes and challenges. At the grassroots level, local, regional and national sports organisations all over Europe are increasingly expected to deliver on larger societal objectives such as promoting sports participation, physical activity and health, social inclusion and gender equality in return for public support. Good governance in national sports organisations is key to enabling the organisations to deliver on sport for all, elite sport as well as larger societal objectives.

In the other range of the hierarchy, professional and semi-professional elite sport face a range of serious integrity issues such as doping, match-fixing, violence, corruption, unsustainable mega-events and increasing pressure from political and financial interests.

As the public debates on a variety of these challenges develop and intertwine, it is becoming increasingly evident that behind the very different and complex challenges lies one common denominator: The need for better governance in sport.

A growing number of sports organisations recognise the need for strengthening their integrity through better governance. Most notably, FIFA and the IAAF have responded to years of public scandals leading to police actions against dozens of top leaders by embarking on a series of reform proposal that may eventually lead to real change. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has vowed in its Agenda 2020 reform programme to improve its own governance and encourages international federations to do likewise. In November 2015, the IOC President even called for independent benchmarking of the governance standards inside the Olympic family of sports federations – and although the Association of Olympic Summer International Federations (ASOIF) can hardly be described as independent, it has responded to the call by launching a self-assessment tool for its 28 member federations. Nevertheless, very few organisations at the national and international level have embarked on serious, in-depth reforms of their own governance.

The Sports Governance Observer tool

The Sports Governance Observer benchmarking tool was first developed by Play the Game/Danish Institute for Sports Studies in co-operation with six European Universities (Loughborough University,

Utrecht University, KU Leuven, German Sport University Cologne, IDHEAP Lausanne and Ljubljana University) and the European Journalism Centre in 2012-2013.

The project was realised thanks to financial support from the European Commission under the framework of the EU Preparatory Actions in the field of sport.

AGGIS provided the theoretical foundation and first empirical evidence that allowed KU Leuven and Play the Game/Idan to further develop the tool, adjusting the indicators and adding a grading system for each indicator.

On that basis, Dr. Arnout Geeraert from KU Leuven authored the first 'Sports Governance Observer' study in 2015, the most comprehensive and independent analysis of international sports governance so far. The report focused on the 35 international Olympic federations, and the full report and an overview of the main findings can be found at www.sportsgovernanceobserver.org

SGO 2017 partners

The 'National Sports Governance Observer' project distinguishes between 'Full' and 'Associated' Partners. All partners are fully committed to the project and its implementation and have their travel and subsistence costs in relation to the project's planned meetings reimbursed.

Full Partners undertake the responsibility to conduct the academic research and write the national reports in their respective countries.

Associated Partners are committed to give advice, assist with the development and implementation of the benchmarking tool, and disseminate knowledge about and results from the 'National Sports Governance Observer'.

Full Partners (Academic research and reporting)

KU Leuven has been a centre of learning for nearly six centuries. Today, it is Belgium's largest university and, founded in 1425, one of the oldest and most renowned universities in Europe. LINES [Leuven International and European Studies] is the KU Leuven's institute for the study of international politics and European affairs at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Utrecht University, founded in 1636, has evolved into a modern and leading institution with a growing international reputation. The Shanghai Ranking ranks the university in the Netherlands on 1, on a 13th place in Europe and worldwide on a shared 52nd place. The University is home to around 30,000 students and 6,500 staff. One of its Master's programmes is 'Sport management and Sport Policy', run by the School of Governance (USG).

The University of Warsaw (UW, since 1816) is a public research-oriented university, Poland's largest and finest university. From its beginning UW has played a major role in the intellectual, political, and cultural life of Poland, and is recognized worldwide as a leading academic centre in Central Europe.

The German Sport University Cologne (GSU) is Germany's most important academic centre of teaching and research in physical education and sport science – and one of the largest specialised universities world-wide. With 20 scientific departments it covers a wide range of sport science in teaching and research. The Institute of European Sport Development and Leisure Studies and its newly established chair for sport politics aim to contribute to the European dimension of sport in particular. T

Molde University College (MUC), Norway, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, has approximately 25 academic staff, and comprises highly qualified professors and associate professors with mixed international backgrounds within the fields of economics, finance, political science, law and sport management. Around 10-12 are engaged in teaching and research activities within the field of Sport Management.

University of Bucharest, Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies (FJSC). The faculty is devised as an academic institution, whose purpose is to train professional journalists, able to answer the needs of modern journalism, as well as specialists of advertising, public relations and research in various fields of communication.

Associated Partners (advice, implementation, dissemination):

The Cyprus Sports Organisation (CSO) was established in 1969 and is the highest Sport Authority in the Republic of Cyprus. It is a semi-governmental, non-profit organisation and it is politically supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The Flemish Sports Confederation (The Vlaamse Sportfederatie - VSF) is the umbrella organization of the sports federations of the Flemish Community in Belgium. The VSF hereby represents app. 90 sports federations and their app. 19,000 sports clubs and app. 1.4 mio. members.

The Romanian Football Federation (FRF) is a non-profit organization established in 1909. The institutional vocation of the FRF is to promote football all over the Romanian territory, to develop the football phenomenon in all its amplitude and to provide an organizational model for Romanian sports.

The Danish Football Association (Dansk Boldspil-Union; DBU) was founded in 1889, and is a founding member of both FIFA and UEFA. DBU is the governing body of football in Denmark and is the largest sports association in Denmark, with more than 330,000 players in app. 1,600 Danish football clubs.

The Polish Golf Union (PGU) was founded 1993. Currently, it associates 72 golf clubs, which, in turn, have about 4,100 members, who have a sport license (handicap card). Since 2012, PGU members are also the Golf Instructors Association PGA Poland and the Polish Senior Golfers Association.

Norwegian Football Association (Norges Fotballforbund; NFF) was founded in 1902, and became a FIFA member in 1908, and a UEFA member in 1954. NFF is the governing body of football in Norway, and the largest sports association in Norway.

The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) under the Council of Europe aims to promote sport and emphasise its positive values, to establish international standards and develop a framework for a pan-European platform of intergovernmental sports co-operation, while at the same time helping the public authorities of the 37 EPAS member States, sports federations and NGOs to promote sport and make it healthier, fairer and better governed.

The International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE) is the world's largest network of national and international organisations that are concerned with sport, sport science and physical education. Since 1958 ICSSPE has reached out to millions of people across the globe through research activities, knowledge sharing and capacity building, as well as policy advice and development.

The European Association for Sports Management (EASM) was established in 1993 as an independent association of people involved or interested in the management of sport in the broadest sense. EASM membership is composed of academics and professionals from the public, voluntary and commercial sectors. Members of EASM come from nearly 40 different countries, and from every continent.

Project coordination

Play the Game is an initiative run by the Danish Institute for Sports Studies (Idan), aiming at raising the ethical standards of sport and promoting democracy, transparency and freedom of expression in world sport. Through its nine international conferences since 1997, its website, news production, extensive network, and research initiatives, Play the Game has become a unique independent platform for raising and developing awareness on a number of issues related to modern sport.

The Danish Institute for Sports Studies (Idrættens Analyseinstitut - Idan) is an independent research centre set up by the Danish Ministry of Culture in 2004. The primary objectives of Idan is to initiate and develop a broad range of social science research projects in the field of sports, to analyse sports political initiatives, and to stimulate public debate about the most important issues in the sports sector.

More information

For any question or comment you may have to the SGO2017 project, please contact the project coordinator

Jens Sejer Andersen
International Director, Play the Game/Danish Institute for Sports Studies
jens@playthegame.org
Mobile phone +45 20 71 07 01

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