

Headline 4.2 Board composition, democratic process and elections

1. Definition

Democracy is a system of governance including all eligible members of the organisation. In practice, this governance is typically implemented through a set of elected representatives (the Board) that receive a mandate from the voting members of the General Assembly. Elections are therefore an integral part of a democratic system.

A democratic sports organisation must ensure that all actors have the opportunity to contribute to the organisation's activities and to participate in the policy processes, with respect to their role and their status in the organisation (member/observer/stakeholder). Although various democratic systems exist, several minimum standards can be determined, including the need for free, regular, transparent, and fair elections as well as the need for clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and competencies of the different bodies of the organisation, as well as clear rules on how stakeholders can be involved in these bodies.

The democratic process is closely linked to aspects of: "Responsibilities and clearness of role" (2.3) and "Decision-making processes" (4.3)

2. Ideal scenario

The organisation has established and defined a clear composition and set of responsibilities for its Board including elected Board members as well as the possibility of appointed or co-opted experts. The roles, responsibilities, and competencies of all Board members have been clearly defined and described. Board members are elected by voting members of the organisation during the General Assembly through a fair and democratic process described within the statutes or the constitution. Appointed or co-opted experts are chosen through an open and transparent recruitment process, are external from the organisation and are selected based on their skills. An appointment commission can support these processes as an independent advisory committee for the organisation. In addition, the regular turnover of Board members is foreseen for instance through a limitation on both the length of a mandate and the possible renewal of mandates. Access for new candidates is encouraged and facilitated by induction and training programs.

3. Risks

- Integrity issues (e.g. conflict of interests, corruption...).
- Appointments are based on private/personal interests rather than the organisation's interests.
- Reputational incidents/negative public image.
- Mismanagement/inefficiency.
- Board without strategic guidance/incapable Board/missing skills in Board.
- Power is in the hands of one or a limited number of people.
- Fake elections.
- Democratic deficit.
- Lack of stakeholder involvement leads to a lack of support by members.
- Inability to find new and right candidates for positions on the Board.
- Uncertainty regarding responsibilities when an issue arises.

- Board not representing the membership/lack of diversity.

4. Instruments and key elements

<i>Instruments</i>	<i>Key elements</i>
Board strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson or President with the necessary skills to chair the Board. • Composition of the Board (elected vs appointed Board members) with a clear description of roles, duties and competencies of Board members (see Role description of Board members under “Clearness of role”). • Clearness of role and responsibilities of the Board versus other bodies such as management and General Assembly. • Fixed and pre-determined term limits for Board members (length of mandate and number of possible re-elections). • Arrangements regarding remuneration or reimbursements. • Succession planning to encourage new candidates including induction and training programs for new Board members. • Approval by the General Assembly. • Promotion of equality and diversity within the Board and representativeness of membership. • Safeguarding democratic principles.
Appointment/nomination/election commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent commission that provides advice to the Board and/or General Assembly. • Clear description of tasks and responsibilities of this commission (identification of needed skills, expertise, etc.). • Clear rules on the composition of this commission (with full respect to independence). • The commission should enable the General Assembly or the Board to make an informed decision and to elect/select the right candidate for the position. It should in no way undermine the democratic process of election.
Election process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear procedures for nomination of candidates. • Timely communication of the candidates towards the voting members (with important information such as CV, previous mandates within the organisation and other mandates). • Fair, clear and democratic voting procedure. • Involvement of full membership and description of electoral rights for each member. • Possible “screening” of candidates by the election commission or ethical commission prior to the election. • Possibility to appeal (e.g. to ethical commission) in case of misconduct. • General principles to be included in the constitution / statutes of the organisation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage equality and diversity in terms of promotion of candidates to stand for election.
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5. Good practice examples

Example “Board Strategy” and “Appointment Committee”

Organisation: New Zealand Rugby Association

Description: The national rugby federation of New Zealand has implemented a new Board strategy, which includes a transition to a structure featuring three Elected Board Members, three Appointed Board Members, and three Nominated Board Members over a three-year period. This new composition blends elected, nominated, and appointed members, with Nominated Board Members being proposed by Provincial Unions or the New Zealand Māori Rugby Board and then appointed by the Appointments and Remuneration Committee, starting with the first appointment in April 2018. The strategy establishes clear representation rules, such as mandating that one of the Nominated Board Member positions be held by a representative of Māori, who also automatically serves as the NZR Representative on the New Zealand Māori Rugby Board.

The Appointment and Remuneration Panel is responsible for appointing Board Members and recommending the maximum annual amount of remuneration for Board Members and Officers for consideration by the Annual General Meeting. The statutes also clearly define the procedures of the committee as well as its formation and composition (see ‘Schedule 6’ of the statutes). These provisions also cover the link with the other bodies within the organisation, for instance when written notice needs to be given to the Chief Executive Officer.

Further information:

[New Zealand Rugby Board \(nzrugby.co.nz\)](http://nzrugby.co.nz)

[New Zealand Rugby Constitution \(nzrugby.co.nz\)](http://nzrugby.co.nz)

Example “Board Strategy”, “Nomination Commission” and “Election Process”

Organisation: National Olympic Committee of Australia (AOC)

Description: The composition and the functioning of the Board of the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) have been described in its constitution. The Board is a mixture of appointed, ex officio (IOC members) and elected members. One of the main objectives is to represent the different stakeholders of the AOC including the athletes, IOC members or national federations which are entitled to nominate one person for the election. In addition, the voting process is also well defined in the constitution with a set of practical information regarding the running of the election including quorum, majority and ballots system. The tasks, power and responsibilities of the Board have also been described in the constitution in particular regarding the transparency of the meeting, confidentiality of the discussion and ethical behaviour of the members. Besides the provisions included in the statutes, the NOC also has a ‘Culture, Remuneration and Nominations Committee’. A specific charter sets out the tasks and responsibilities of this committee. This committee is among other things responsible for succession planning and culture

(article 2 of the Charter). In this regard, it is stated that the committee shall review and advise the Board of the organisation on the succession plans for the President and for the Board, but also for the CEO, senior management and staff.

Further information:

[Governance | Australian Olympic Committee \(olympics.com.au\)](#)

[2019 AOC Culture Remuneration and Nominations Committee Charter.pdf \(olympics.com.au\)](#)

Example “Election Process”

Organisation: International Volleyball Federation (FIVB)

Description: The International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) has established a very detailed process for its internal elections. In particular, the FIVB constitution sets out the general rules that regulate the election of the Board of Administration, of the President and the gender-in-minority members of the Board of Administration. It is worth noting that the constitution foresees the date of the elections (during the year of the Summer Olympic Games), the duration of terms as well as persons eligible for the position. To ensure the fairness of the vote, candidatures should be sent 6 months in advance in order to be validated by an ethics panel following a check of compliance with all prerequisites as well as an integrity check and scrutiny. There are specific rules for the position of the President. It is also specified what the follow-up is in case a candidate fails to meet the prerequisites or pass the integrity check. Furthermore, the document also details the process that leads to the election of the Board of Administration by the General Assemblies of the different Confederations. In addition to the constitution, the FIVB has also adopted ‘Rules of procedure of the FIVB congress’ in which elections take place. Linked to the constitution, this document specifies the practical organisation of the election including the order of elections during the meeting and the election procedure (announcement, distribution of ballots, number of ballots, etc.). It also recalls the election system: two rounds except if one candidate gets more than 50% of the votes in the first round.

Further information: [Constitution and Regulations – FIVB](#)

6. Steps to the next level

To level 2 ★★ “Emerging”	To level 3 ★★★ “Developing”	To level 4 ★★★★ “Established”	To level 5 ★★★★★ “Embedded”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider during a Board meeting the profile of candidates that could be part of your Board. Discuss potential roles and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define specific roles and responsibilities for some of the Board members including as a minimum the President, the Treasurer and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define the specific role and responsibilities of each of the elected Board members. Provide a clear role description for all members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define or refine the specific role and responsibilities of each of the elected Board members. Provide a clear role description for all members.

<p>responsibilities for your Board members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt basic rules to regulate membership of the Board including the limitation of the length of Board term. • Encourage the organisation of a functional election procedure for some of your Board positions. Consider which persons or organisations are eligible to vote. 	<p>the Secretary General.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine or adopt the rules regulating the membership of the Board including the length of mandate and the maximum number of terms of a Board member. • Discuss possible candidates for Board positions when Board members approach the end of their mandate. • Adopt formal rules for the election of Board members. Ensure that Board members are elected as a minimum by a selected group of electors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include the description, tasks, and responsibilities of the main Board positions, such as President, Treasurer, and Secretary General in the constitution/statutes. • Discuss and adopt the succession planning strategy for the President and the Board including the encouragement of new candidates and the detection of candidates with certain skills and experience. Ensure regular turnover of Board members by limiting the number and length of terms. • Adopt or refine the formal rules for the election of Board members providing voting rights for all eligible members. Describe the practical organisation of the election procedure safeguarding a fair and democratic process. Consider the possibility of creating a nomination committee to support this process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include the description, tasks and responsibilities of all Board members in the constitution/statutes or the internal rules regulating the procedures of the Board. • Regularly assess the functioning of your Board (e.g. skills audit) and define areas in which expertise is missing. Following the assessment, nominate or co-opt relevant experts on the Board. • Discuss and adopt the succession planning strategy for the President and the Board including the encouragement of new candidates and the detection of candidates with certain skills and experience. Ensure regular turnover of Board members by limiting the number and length of terms. Provide induction and training programs for new Board members. • Adopt or refine the rules for candidates for Board positions including conflict of interest declarations
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			<p>as well as rules on nomination of candidates by members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the possibility of creating a nomination committee to support the election and appointment process. Adopt clear procedures on the composition, role and responsibilities of this committee. • Adopt or refine the formal rules for the election of Board members providing voting rights for all eligible members during the General Assembly. Include these rules in the constitution/statutes of your organisation. Describe the practical organisation of the election procedure safeguarding a fair and democratic process. Ensure that electors are aware of their rights and duties. Assess these procedures regularly.
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