

## **IPACS Benchmark Guidelines**

**Updated 21 December 2021, version 6**

### **IPACS Benchmark C6 – The organisation has term limits for elected officials**

#### Definitions

- Term limits – rules restricting the length of time that an individual can serve in one or multiple non-staff roles within an organisation, whether elected or appointed; the organisation may define a term as two, three or four years (or, more rarely, longer) and restrict the number of times an individual can be re-elected; restrictions may relate to consecutive terms, the total number of years served or a combination of both

#### Introduction to this Benchmark and its significance

- Having appropriate term limits in place for elected positions (and potentially for appointed positions) ensures a degree of turnover in senior, decision-making roles, which reduces the risk of power becoming entrenched and allows for a new vision for the organisation; in addition, term limits can support progress towards gender equity
- Term limits of suitable length can also aid continuity and retention of institutional knowledge by setting expectations that individuals can serve for a number of years
- It is helpful for serving officials, potential candidates, members and for stakeholders to understand the maximum period of service as this can reduce potential political pressure (e.g. because the rules require a particular official to step down at the next election)
- The need to have renewal is as important at national and continental levels as it is at international level, for both the members of the governing body and the President; it is a chain effect
- If an organisation is generally well governed, with functioning democratic procedures, term limits might theoretically not be needed as turnover and renewal would take place in any case; however, term limits can provide protection when an individual or small group have effective control of an organisation for a period of time

#### Commentary on the action to be taken

- The organisation should put in place term limits for the President and governing body at national, continental and international levels
- It may be appropriate to have term limits for selected other committees and non-staff roles
- The term limits for the President should be consecutive and unique; a former President may not be able to be re-elected
- An individual should not be able to serve more than the term limit on the governing body consecutively, counted separately from the term limits of the President; a proportionate waiting period should be mandatory before an individual may be eligible again
- The term limits of the members of the governing body and the President are separate
- In Olympic Movement organisations, terms are typically four years to match Olympic cycles, although there have been changes in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 crisis
- The recommended limit for the President is three terms of four years
- The recommended limit for the members of the governing body is two terms with the possibility of re-election after a waiting period of one term; it could also be envisaged to have three terms as a limit with a waiting period of two terms
- Age limits may be considered as an additional method of ensuring a degree of turnover in senior roles
- Domestic legislation must be respected
- See also Recommendation C5 (eligibility rules) and C8 (conflicts of interest)

Investment requirement – limited – putting rules in place; however, management time and significant stakeholder engagement work may be needed to persuade the membership to support the introduction of term limits

## Guidance according to stage of organisation

### Early stage

- The organisation has term limits for the President and members of the governing body

### Developing

- The organisation has term limits restricting the total number of years to be served in different roles including as President and as a member of the governing body
- The limit for the President is a maximum of three terms of four years
- There is a term limit for the members of the governing body and a waiting period before an individual can be eligible once more
- When an organisation introduces term limits, there are transitional arrangements providing clarity about how terms served before the new rules were in place will be counted; transitional measures must be limited to no more than one term
- The organisation's term limit rules do not have an exemption allowing for additional terms "in exceptional circumstances" or similar
- When age limits are also in place, while respecting the general term limits, an age limit extension could be envisaged for a maximum of the duration of one term, for exceptional reasons linked to the need of the organisation
- Term limit rules explain how partial terms are counted (e.g. when an individual is elected between the normal electoral General Assemblies)

### Advanced

- The principles of the developing stage are extended to all elected and appointed non-staff positions
- There are no exceptions to any term limits
- A term limit is provided for the other elected or appointed non-staff positions (possible for a greater number of terms than the members of the governing body), including for the members of independent committees
- All the term limits shall not exceed three terms of four years

## Good practice examples

### International Federations (from 2020)

- FEI - Board Members may serve three terms, then there is a waiting period (of at least one term) before being eligible for a new role. The President may only serve three terms as President – see [Statutes](#) 19.6
- IFSC - Executive Board members are eligible for a maximum of three terms – see [Statutes](#), article 25. In the 2021 elections, Board members who have already served for three terms or are in their third term will only be eligible for one more term
- World Rugby – Chair and Vice-Chair have a term limit of 2 x 4 years – see [Bye-Law](#) 9.8.1. For the Executive Committee, there is a term limit of 12 years in aggregate (10.3.1.d)
- International Netball Federation – Directors may serve no more than three consecutive terms of four years. See [Articles of Association](#) (Section 6)  
Also see [Board Governance Policy](#): Directors may serve a maximum of 12 years and may not reapply to sit on the Board until a period of three years has passed
- WCF – [Constitution](#) 16.8.2-3 – limit of 3 x 4 years in one position and maximum of 19 years on the Board

### Overall standard among International Federations:

- 22 out of 31 ASOIF members had some type of term limit in place for elected officials in the 2019-20 review. Usually, this is a limit of three terms of four years for the president and sometimes for other officials. Some IFs have exemption clauses or permit individuals to serve for a much longer period if they move from one role to another

### Continental Bodies

- None seen

### National Olympic Committees

- Olympic Federation of Ireland – limit of two terms of four years with transitional arrangements – [Constitution](#), Articles 18-19
- Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China – term limits for elected officials of three four-year terms – [by-law](#) A.8 to Article 11

### National Federations

- British Rowing – limit of two terms of four years with possible third term if elected chair – [Articles](#) 23-25

### Selected references

- [ASOIF GTF Questionnaire 2019-20](#), Indicator 4.6
- [SIGGS](#) Principle 4 (Democracy, Participation and Inclusivity), Indicator 4 - What type of succession planning does your organisation carry out for the Board of your organisation?; Roadmap Principle 4
- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, [Addendum to the report “Working towards a framework for modern sports governance”](#):  
Criterion 2.1 “Regular elections of the governing bodies” – Term limits for elected officials
- European Commission Expert Group on Good Governance, [“Principles of Good Governance in Sport”](#):
  - Principle 4.e(7): Adopting fixed terms of office to allow regular refreshing of decision-making bodies;
  - Principle 6.a(8): Appropriate term limits for board members should be in place as part of succession planning processes.
- Geeraert, A. (2018). [Sports Governance Observer 2018](#). An assessment of good governance in five international sports federations. Aarhus: Play the Game/Danish Institute for Sports Studies, p.11-15: Principle 16: The organisation has established term limits
- IOC’s [“Consolidated Minimum Requirements for Implementation of the Basic Principles of Good Governance for NOCs”](#):

- Theme 2.9: Election or renewal of office bearers on a regular basis – Principle 1: The duration of the terms of office should be predetermined in order to allow election/renewal of office bearers on a regular basis (e.g. every four years).
- Document EPAS(2018)47rev3 – “Optimising the processes of compliance with good governance principles to mitigate the risk of corruption”:  
Paragraph 4: Terms of office: duration and limits.

ASOIF indicator 4.6 – scoring definitions used in the 2019-20 assessment

- 0 – No
- 1 – Some term limits but possibility of multiple re-elections to the same position
- 2 – Term limits in place with a maximum of no more than 12 years in 1 role
- 3 – Term limits in place with a maximum of 3 x 4 year cumulative terms in the same or multiple roles
- 4 – Term limits with a maximum of 3 x 4 year terms in same or multiple roles, waiting period before new role