

IPACS Benchmark Guidelines

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IPACS Benchmark C3 – Election process takes place with secret ballot under a clear procedure/regulation and independent supervision

Definitions

- Secret ballot – a voting process (such as by use of paper voting forms or an electronic system) in which the choice made by the voter remains anonymous

Introduction to this Benchmark and its significance

- When a sports body with a democratic structure has a robust electoral process with independent supervision, stakeholders internally and externally are more likely to have confidence in the organisation (see also Recommendation C1 on electing leaders of an organisation)
- It is important that voters (who may be members, stakeholders etc. depending on the nature of the organisation) can vote anonymously so that they feel free to choose who they believe to be the best candidate or the best proposal without fear of repercussions; anonymous voting may also reduce the risk of an attempt at bribery or coercion
- In addition to giving confidence to stakeholders, independent supervision can reduce pressure on staff or officials within the organisation, who otherwise may risk becoming involved in political disputes when they should remain neutral

Commentary on the action to be taken

- The organisation should have rules in place explaining how its members can vote with provision for secret ballots, covering a range of possible scenarios
- Rules should allow for the possibility of secret voting by either electronic or paper methods both for the election of individuals and voting for proposals (for example, at the General Assembly or in the Executive Board)
- Voting for the election of individuals should be secret as a principle, even in the case of elections with a single candidate; exceptions can be made in limited cases (for example for election for roles below governing body level); however, a secret vote is required when requested by a small proportion of voting members present
- There should be independent scrutiny of the voting process
- There may be advantages in a voting system which is weighted, with different numbers of votes available to member organisations linked to their contribution to the activity of the organisation and/or scale; a weighted voting system should be proportionate so that the organisation maintains a genuinely democratic structure
- If the organisation permits proxy voting (voting by a person who is participating in a meeting on behalf of an organisation or individual who is not present), each member present should be limited to holding the proxy for one other voting member to avoid one member accumulating substantial voting power; an advantage of hybrid/remote meetings is that it should be easier for members to participate; in general, proxy voting should not be encouraged, provided that members have a realistic chance to take part in meetings; the organisation may choose to prohibit proxy voting
- There are advantages in having a significant number of voting members in the General Assembly as this reduces the risk of results being determined by a very small number of votes
- See also Recommendations C1 (election of officials), C2 (campaigning rules), C4 (non-staff appointments), C5 (eligibility rules) and C6 (term limits)

Investment requirement – development of the rules will require some management time; remote, verified electronic voting systems are currently expensive; video-conferencing software offers a cheaper alternative but with more limited functionality; paper ballots are cheap but the electoral process is time-consuming if there are a large number of votes

Guidance according to stage of organisation

Early stage

- The organisation has basic rules in place for voting, which include the minimum quorum and provision for secret ballots either by default or when requested by a small proportion of voting members present; secret voting is the default procedure for the election of individuals
- The organisation has rules that cover a range of scenarios, such as procedures in the event of there being a single or multiple candidates (potentially with multiple rounds of elections), how to handle a tied vote, and managing protests
- Electronic and/or paper ballots are kept for a specified period of time after the election in case of protests; after that period has elapsed, the ballots are destroyed

Developing

- The organisation has rules specifically allowing for paper or electronic voting methods; in larger organisations or when a significant number of votes will be taking place, the electronic method is the default
- The organisation has rules that set out the sequence of the process from start to finish, including the order in which positions will be elected
- The organisation has rules that allow for the possibility of elections taking place in virtual and/or hybrid meetings to ensure wide participation

Advanced

- There is independent scrutiny of the voting process, such as via a suitably qualified, independent committee, a notary or elected scrutineers
- The organisation's rules ensure a secret ballot even when there is only a single candidate for a role
- The organisation's rules allow for the possibility of open voting for proposals, in specified circumstances
- If the organisation has a weighted voting system, the voting allocations are reviewed regularly based on transparent and objective criteria which are published

Good practice examples

International Federations (from 2020)

- FIG - Voting rules are explained in detail – see [Statutes](#) article 11.17 An electronic system overseen by an external company was used at previous Congresses
- ITF:
 - The voting rules in the [Constitution](#) are detailed – see article 18 (t)
 - The voting procedure is developed with the Independent Election Panel and independent auditors. The process was described to voters during the [AGM](#) (see page 24)
- World Athletics - There are detailed election rules in the [Constitution](#) (article 35) and Rules of Congress (articles 10 and 11). Rules include provisions for paper ballot voting in case of a failure in the electronic system and cover various scenarios. Article 10.2 specifies open voting for proposals for rule changes, meaning that the names of the Member Federations which voted in favour, against or abstained will be displayed openly

Overall standard among International Federations:

- 28 out of 31 members of ASOIF had fairly detailed voting rules in place in the 2019-20 review

Continental Body

- Asian Equestrian Federation – voting rules explained - [Statutes](#) Article 15

National Olympic Committees

- Puerto Rico Olympic Committee - election rules – [Regulations](#) 1.C and 2.E
- New Zealand Olympic Committee – election rules – [Constitution](#) Article 18

National Federations

- Hockey India – [election bye-laws](#)

Selected references

- [ASOIF GTF Questionnaire 2019-20](#), Indicator 4.3
- [SIGGS](#) Principle 4 (Democracy, Participation and Inclusivity), Indicator 5 - How does your organisation elect Board members within your organisation?; Roadmap Principle 4
- European Commission Expert Group on Good Governance, [“Principles of Good Governance in Sport”](#):
 - Principle 4.e(1): Minimum democratic principles for appointment to decision making bodies – A commitment and requirement to hold free, fair and regular elections
- 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 12: Board members are (re-)appointed according to clear and democratic procedures
- IOC's [“Consolidated Minimum Requirements for Implementation of the Basic Principles of Good Governance for NOCs”](#):
Theme 2.5 “Democratic process”, Principle 1: “Democratic processes, such as elections, should be governed by clear, transparent and fair rules.”

ASOIF indicator 4.3 – scoring definitions used in the 2019-20 assessment

- 0 – No
- 1 – Some provision for secret ballots
- 2 – Clear procedure/regulations in the statutes for secret ballots
- 3 – Clear procedure/regulations for secret ballots, electronic and paper options if appropriate
- 4 – Clear regulations for secret ballots, cover various scenarios including handling protests