

IPACS Benchmark Guidelines

Updated 1 February 2022, version 6

IPACS Benchmark C7 – The organisation provides for the representation of all key stakeholders (including “active” athletes as defined in the Olympic Charter) in its committee structures and other relevant decision-making groups

Definitions

- Active athletes – an individual who competed regularly in the organisation’s competitions, retiring no more than four years before the date of their first election to an athletes’ commission or equivalent
- Key stakeholders – entities, groups or individuals that have an important interest in the activity of the organisation and are affected by it or can affect it themselves; typical examples for a sports organisation in addition to athletes may include members, any regional sub-units (continental, regional, local etc.); other types of stakeholders who should be consulted when needed may include volunteers, staff, event organisers, governments, civil society, suppliers, commercial partners and many more

a) Athletes and regional representatives

Introduction to this Benchmark and its significance

- Regardless of the type of sports organisation, decision-making is improved when the interests of athletes and other stakeholders are given appropriate consideration
- In sports bodies such as National and International Federations and National Olympic Committees, competitive athletes comprise a vital stakeholder group

Commentary on the action to be taken

- One or more active athletes should participate in governing body meetings with voting rights
- An athletes’ commission or similar, elected by athletes, should be in place to consider the interests of athletes in detail, reporting to the governing body
- The organisations should provide adequate budget and staff support to enable athlete representatives to work effectively; timely provision of information is vital
- In many cases regions and sporting disciplines/groups will nominate or elect representatives to the governing body or relevant committees
- The organisation should consult athletes (and regional sub-units) regularly with direct representation being only one aspect of their involvement in decision-making
- See also Recommendation C9 (equality and diversity)

Investment requirement – limited; there may be some associated costs for the process of recruiting an athletes’ commission (e.g. holding elections at a championship), plus budget for their activity, including travel and accommodation for athlete representatives attending meetings; formal consultation exercises require management time and there may be associated costs

Guidance according to stage of organisation

Early stage

- The organisation has an athletes’ commission or equivalent, composed of a similar number of female and male active athletes (e.g. at least 40% of each gender) who collectively cover the range of sporting activity
- One or more athletes are voting members of the governing body with voting rights

Developing and Advanced

- The athletes’ commission is elected by athletes
- The organisation provides adequate budget, staff support and actively facilitates the participation of athletes’ commission members in decision-making

- The organisation regularly consults athletes, beyond the direct representation of athletes in the governing body

b) Other key stakeholders

Introduction to this Benchmark and its significance

- All sports organisations operate in a system in which there are multiple stakeholder organisations that can only achieve their objectives through co-operation and consultation; the range of stakeholder bodies will vary according to the nature of the sports organisation (national, international, single sport, multi-sport etc.), the country where it is based, the scale of its operations and so on
- Stakeholders are more likely to be co-operative when their views are being taken into account
- Providing opportunities for stakeholders to participate directly in decision-making through representation on the governing body with voting rights and/or other committees and relevant structures, supported with adequate resources, demonstrates that the organisation is serious about stakeholder engagement

Commentary on the action to be taken

- The organisation should have formal structures establishing some types of key stakeholder representation and consider carefully the appropriate way to involve other stakeholders in decision-making, for example through consultation
- The appropriate type of involvement of some key stakeholders in decision-making, for example fan groups, public authorities, civil society and commercial partners, should be considered; options include designated committees, formal consultation, open forums, regular dialogue and others

Investment requirement – limited; formal consultation exercises require management time and there may be associated costs

Guidance according to stage of organisation

Early stage

- The organisation has formal processes for the involvement of key stakeholders in decision-making (e.g. representatives appointed to the governing body and/or relevant committees). The organisation consults its membership regularly

Developing

- The organisation's overall strategy covers stakeholder engagement (see Recommendation A3 – vision and strategy)

Advanced

- The organisation involves a wide range of stakeholders in decision-making, appropriate to its nature and role, including external stakeholders
- The organisation has a stakeholder engagement strategy
- The organisation's commercial partners are consulted as part of the decision-making in relevant areas but with protection to prevent undue influence in the governance of the organisation (for example, there is a marketing advisory group which provides input but does not have decision-making authority)

Good practice examples

International Federations (from 2020)

- IFSC - One female and one male representative elected by the Athletes' Commission on the [Executive Board](#) - see [Statutes](#), article 24
- ISSF: The Athletes' Committee Chair is a voting member of both the Executive Committee and Administrative Council – see [Constitution](#) 7.2.1 and 8.1.3
- FIE: Members of the Athletes' Commission are elected – see [Statutes](#) 6.3.2. [Election results](#) are published
The President of the Athletes' Commission is a member of the Executive Committee with full voting rights (see [Statutes](#) 5.2.5).
There are rules for the election of the Athletes' Commission – see [Statutes](#) 4.5
- Ju-Jitsu International Federation - Athletes' Commission elects two representatives onto the Executive Board (1 male, 1 female) – see [Statutes](#) 8.2.5.

Overall standard among International Federations:

- 28 out of 31 ASOIF members in the 2019-20 assessment had at least one athlete representative with voting rights on the Executive Board or equivalent
- This topic was one of 20 covered in the 2018-19 GAISF assessment for non-Olympic sports (compared to 50 topics for Olympic sports) as it was judged to be important and feasible for small organisations to achieve

Continental Bodies

- None seen

National Olympic Committees

- Nigerian Olympic Committee – [executive board](#) includes 2 athletes' representatives
- Malta Olympic Committee – [athletes' commission](#) chair is a member of the [executive committee](#)
- Portuguese Olympic Committee – president of athletes' commission is a member of the [executive committee](#)

National Federations

- Royal Dutch Skating Association (KNSB) – 3 athletes on the [Council](#), representing different disciplines

Selected references

- [ASOIF GTF Questionnaire 2019-20](#), Indicator 4.7
- [SIGGS](#) Principle 4 (Democracy, Participation and Inclusivity), Indicator 9 – How does your organisation liaise with its athletes?; Roadmap Principle 4
- European Commission – Expert Group on Good Governance, [“Principles of Good Governance in Sport”](#):
Principle 3.a: Involvement of stakeholders
Principle 3.b: Minimum standards for stakeholders' representation
Principle 3.c: Commitment from stakeholders
Principle 3.d: Formalisation of role of stakeholders
Principle 4.d: Role and rights of members and stakeholders
Principle 4.e(2): Minimum democratic principles for appointment to decision making bodies – Ensuring that broad stakeholder consultation and/or representation exists
Principle 5.a: Delegation of tasks to members and stakeholders
- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, [Addendum to the report “Working towards a framework for modern sports governance”](#):
Criterion 4.4: Athletes' involvement, participation and care
- 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: Principles 19 to 21 refer to the involvement of athletes, referees and coaches in policy processes

- IOC [Olympic Charter 2021](#), By-law to Rule 16, 2.2.2:
 - “If the candidate is proposed as an active athlete in the meaning of Rule 16.1.1.2, such candidate must have been elected or appointed to the IOC Athletes’ Commission not later than the edition of the Games of the Olympiad or the Olympic Winter Games following the Olympic Games in which such candidate last participated”
- IOC’s [“Consolidated Minimum Requirements for Implementation of the Basic Principles of Good Governance for NOCs”](#):
 - Theme 2.4 “Representative governing bodies” – Principle 1: Members of the organisation should be represented within the governing bodies, particularly women and athletes
 - Theme 6.1 “Right to participate and involvement of the athletes in the Olympic and Sports Movement and governing bodies” – Principle 3 The voice of athletes should be heard in sporting organisations

ASOIF indicator 4.7 – scoring definitions used in the 2019-20 assessment

- 0 – No
- 1 – Some representation of key stakeholders in governing bodies
- 2 – Designated key stakeholder representatives in governing bodies (not consultative)
- 3 – Representation of key stakeholders including athlete(s) on Executive Board, duly elected/designated by the relevant body
- 4 – State of art athlete and other key stakeholder representation