Chapter 25

The Governance of the Board of NGBs in High Performance Sport

Veerle De Bosscher – Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Brussels, Belgium)
Popi Sotiriadou – Griffith University, Australia

Abstract

The growing number of stakeholders and organisations involved in managing high performance (HP) sport has resulted in greater need for coordination, strategic management and transparency. As the expectations on national governing bodies to deliver improved elite sport performances grew, boards of directors, in collaboration with the sport clubs, steer, coordinate and control the athlete pathway development. This chapter draws on the results of a large-scale project that compared elite sport policies in 15 countries. The results revealed some strengths and weaknesses of volunteer-based NGB boards that influence decision making and create tensions between the elite and grassroots levels of sport. Furthermore, directors who are elected by community/grassroots sport clubs tend to be unfamiliar with the high demands of managing HP sport. The chapter discusses board composition directions as they relate to both existing trends on one hand and requirements for dealing with HP environments on the other.
The governance of the board of national governing bodies in high performance sport

High performance sport is the top end of sport development and encapsulates any athlete or team that competes at an international or national level. High performance sport management is the process of understanding what is to be achieved (planning), developing the capacity of people and organisations to achieve it (capacity building and leading), providing the required support (resourcing), and offering feedback to athletes and teams to improve their performance (monitoring and evaluating) (Sotiriadou and De Bosscher, 2017). Planning, capacity building and leading, resourcing, and monitoring and evaluating athlete progress and performances represent the key performance management functions in the strategic management of HP sport in order to obtain and maintain sporting excellence. The formalisation of elite pathways outlines the coordination of resources required to develop HP athletes and implies the need for a sophisticated approach to developing and implementing HP development pathways. This sophistication is highlighted through the emergence of professional and highly specialised staff (Emery, Crabtree, and Kerr, 2012) considered necessary for successful HP development pathways. The very nature of governance helps the boards to take strategic approaches, and sport governance is an important part of strategic HP management as it can contribute to improving the organisation’s performance.

The ‘race’ for athletes to win major sport competitions never ceases to intensify. Whilst elite athletes need talent, spirit and dedication, they increasingly rely on a network of sport organisations, governments, sponsors and other stakeholders to reach the top (De Bosscher and Van Bottenburg, 2011). This increase in stakeholders, sources of investment and the growing number of people and organisations involved in HP sport has resulted in greater need for coordination and control (Oakley and Green, 2001, De Bosscher et al., 2015). It has also raised expectations on national governing bodies (NGBs) to deliver improved elite sport performances. The NGBs are a key stakeholder attempting to steer, coordinate and control athlete pathway development (Brouwers et al., 2015) in collaboration with the sport clubs that are a vehicle for talent development starting at the grassroots level. They are mostly governed by a board of directors that decide on the organisation’s strategy and ensure that the management is pursuing the chosen strategy appropriately. In this paper, we use the term NGBs to describe the governing body for a specific sport (similar to Federations and National Sport Organisations, i.e., NSOs). The NGBs manage competitions, rules, regulations and championships for their sport. Each NGB sanctions competitions in its country and those competitions follow NGB rules. Typical examples of NGBs include Athletics Canada, the
Flemish Gymnastics Federation, and the Lawn Tennis Association (also known as British Tennis).

Research shows that the board’s characteristics may influence organisational effectiveness (Taylor and O'Sullivan, 2009). The governance of NGBs and composition of the board differs considerably between commercial and non-profit sports. While over time NGBs have increasingly professionalised, with paid staff members that manage high performance sport (Nagel et al., 2015), particularly in non-profit sports, the boards are mostly democratically composed of volunteers from sports clubs. Often, these volunteers have different interests and tend to defend the interest of the structure or level of sport (e.g., local or regional) from which they come from (Bayle and Robinson, 2007). This sometimes leads to tensions between elite sport and community/grassroots sport, because board members are not sufficiently familiar with the high demands of elite sport and the dynamic environment HP sport operates and the high specialization level that is needed to make accurate decisions (Ferkins and Van Bottenburg, 2013) or confused about the different goals of both fields (Winand et al., 2010). To address this point, this chapter examines the board governance in NGBs in relation to HP sport and discusses the main issues on the NGB composition and decision making power, as raised by HP managers from various NGBs.

National governing bodies’ board composition

While there is a plethora of theories in the governance of sport that explain the interdependence between organisations (i.e., network theory) (Morrow and Idle, 2008), the diversity of interests that exists within different stakeholders (i.e., stakeholder theory) (Sotiriadou, Shilbury and Quick, 2008), the dependency on others for survival (i.e., resource dependence theory) (Hayhurst and Frisby, 2010) and the design of the governance model as the result of external pressures to conform (institutional theory) (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007), generally research on board governance in NGBs in sport is still in it’s infancy (Ferkins et al., 2005).

Nagel et al. (2015) defined the professionalisation of sport as an organisational process of transformation leading towards rationalisation, efficiency and business-like management. These processes have led to profound organisational changes in sport as sport federations establish contemporary management structures and programs to become more efficient and to adequately meet the expectations of a complex and dynamically changing environment. As a consequence, NGBs reformed the composition of their boards to better reflect business demands (Taylor and
O’Sullivan, 2009) and the governance of sport has moved largely from volunteer-based to a more formalised, business-like form (Dowling, Edwards, and Washington, 2014) of governance that requires the input of expertise in areas including finance marketing and sponsorship or legal issues. These reforms at the formation of governance and the use of a skill matrix to attract and recruit individuals with expertise has lead the implementation of efficiency-based management instruments including strategic planning, human resource management and reporting tools (Nagel et al., 2015). In response to an increasing professionalisation of sport, NGBs have established contemporary management structures and programs to become more efficient and to adequately meet the expectations of a complex and dynamically changing environment.

As a consequence, over time, many NGBs reformed the composition of their boards to better reflect business demands (Taylor and O’Sullivan, 2009) and the governance of sport has moved steadily from volunteer-based to a more formalised, business-like form (Dowling et al., 2014) of governance that requires the input of expertise in areas including finance marketing and sponsorship or legal issues. However, NGBs in many less-commercial and often Olympic sports (e.g., track and field, gymnastics, judo, and badminton), have maintained a non-profit legal structure. Ferkins and Van Bottenburg (2013) outlined three options for board composition of non-profit sport organisations:

(a) A representative board where board members are elected to represent those members;
(b) A hybrid board where there is a mix of elected board members and appointed board Members, and
(c) An independent board where board members are appointed (by an appointments' panel) to govern on behalf of the membership.

To date, the role of the board as it relates to HP sport still varies considerably between the different contexts of commercial elite sport, and non-profit elite sport (Ferkins and Van Botenburg, 2013). Examples of commercial entities in sport include teams in the English Premier League, the Australian National Rugby League and the US National Basketball Association. In these instances, the sport team or club is owned (in a governance sense) by shareholders who, while often indulging a passion, also seek a financial return on their investment (Ferkins and Van Botenburg, 2013). However, in the non-profit elite sport system, the member associations (e.g., sport club or state association) that traditionally have their representative on the board, are creating tensions in the prioritising of resources (Ferkins and Shilbury, 2010). Consider, for example, the priorities of a local soccer club and regional soccer association, and how their priorities may differ from those of the national body such as the
Italian Football Federation (Federcalcio). The local clubs and associations primarily exist for the purposes of soccer participation and the Federcalcio has the responsibility for elite player development and success. Over time NGBs have transformed their boards from being made up of elected members drawn from its state bodies to independent boards to allow them to focus in a more professional and corporate way. However, in many (less commercial) sports, the boards are still largely and democratically composed of club members on a volunteer basis, which can influence the efficiency of decision making.

Methods

This paper draws on the results of a large-scale project, the Sport Policy factors leading to International Sport Success (SPLISS), that compared elite sport policies in 15 countries (De Bosscher et al., 2015). A total of 58 researchers and 33 policy makers collaborated in this project, with one coordinator per nation. Researchers received a research protocol that provided guidance on the process of data collection, aiming to standardise data gathering procedures. Using a mixed methods design, the full project compared nine Pillars and 96 critical success factors (750 sub-factors) to gain evidence on the relationship between elite sport policies and success. This chapter deals with one of the critical success factors measured as part of Pillar 2 (i.e., the organisation, structure and governance of elite sport), namely: ‘the board of NGBs is composed of professionals who make decisions on elite sport’. The project focusses on national level elite sports policies that are government funded, principally Olympic sports, and to a lesser extent, commercialized sports. The SPLISS model and its CSFs may be less applicable to countries where elite sport policy is (also) the remit of non-governmental or private organisations.

Data collection

The national SPLISS research partners collected the data locally in each country, using pre-defined research instruments. They received a research protocol that provided guidance on the process of data collection, aiming to standardise data gathering procedures. The data for this study have been collected in two ways.

First, an overall elite sport policy inventory, which was a comprehensive research instrument in its own right, was used to collect mainly qualitative data, by means of interviews with policy agencies and analysis of existing secondary sources, such as policy documents. The relevant questions for the purpose of this chapter were concerned with whether (a) NGBs are represented by/ accountable to a board of elected members; (b) there is
a legal statute that determines the existence and composition of the NGB’s board; (c) who these members of the NGBs’ board are; (d) NGBs can take decisions without consulting this board; (e) the board is composed of professionals (paid staff, taking care of executive management); (f) a board on elite sport was separated from sport for all/grassroots sport within the NGBs (e.g., by an elite sport commission or sub-committee); (g) to what extent the national Sport Agency (NSA, e.g., Team Denmark, Sport Canada) could influence the structure and governance of NGBs and (h) what was seen as the most important strengths and weaknesses with regard to the decision making process of NGBs (according to the performance director and other relevant stakeholders).

The NSAs act as a leading organisation working in partnership with others to promote sport generally or elite sport in particular. They can be governmental, quasi-governmental or non-governmental. For example, in the UK, UK Sport is the lead body for the development of elite sport. In some nations, for example the Netherlands, the National Olympic Committee and the umbrella organisation for sport have merged to form a single body: NOC*NSF (National Olympic Committee*National Sport Federation).

These data were collected in 15 sport systems (13 nations): Australia (AUS), Brazil (BRA), Canada (CAN), Denmark (DEN), Spain (ESP), Finland (FIN), Flanders (FLA), Japan (JAP), South-Korea (KOR), the Netherlands (NED), Northern-Ireland (N-IRL), Portugal (POR), Switzerland (SUI), Wallonia (WAL) and France (FRA).

Second, a total of 241 high performance directors completed an ‘elite sport climate survey’, that aimed (a) to gather (mainly quantitative) information on indicators or “facts” that cannot easily be measured (De Pelsmacker and Van Kenhove, 1999); and (2) to measure success indicators as they are perceived by their primary users. The HP manager is the head of the elite sport department of an NGB, who manages elite sport development for a particular sport. Sometimes, when no such person is available (especially in smaller nations or smaller NGBs), it means the person responsible for sport development and elite sport development (e.g., development of the nine pillars) in general within that sport, or a sport technical director. In relation to this chapter, performance directors first answered whether their NGB

---

1 As the UK did not take part in the study, Northern Ireland was therefore seen as a ‘nation in its own right’ within the project. Flanders is the northern, Dutch speaking part of Belgium, Wallonia the southern, French and German speaking part are analysed as two distinct nations because both regions have separate sport policies at each level, from local to national (including three separate ministers of sport). Apart from the Olympic Committee (BOIC), whose main task is to select athletes for the Olympic Games, there is no national (federal) policy or structure for sport, nor are there expenditures on sport at federal level.

2 The complete SPLISS study also included 1376 elite coaches and 3142 elite athletes; these data are not relevant for the purpose of this chapter.
had a board of (external) members who make decisions on elite sport and if so, they indicated on a five point Likert scale to what extent they agreed with two statements (see further).

**Data analysis**

In the inventories, data collected from document analysis and interviews were recorded and subsequently processed and interpreted by the local researcher. The answers were returned to the coordinating SPLISS secretary who framed the qualitative data using content analysis. Several international meetings were organised to fine-tune the data collection and the local researchers were asked for additional information if required and to verify interpretation of the international comparative analysis.

**Results**

Overall, the results highlighted that the governance structure of NGBs is very similar in all countries. Most non-profit NGBs are represented by a board of elected members in all sample countries. A precondition is that by law the board is composed in a democratic manner and it consists of a minimal number of members. Table 1 shows an overview by nation.

**Table 1: Overview by country on the decision making of NGBs (Inventory questions)**

| AUS | BRA | CAN | DEN | ESP | FIN | FRA | IRL | JPN | KOR | NED | POR | SUI | WAL |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| NGBs are represented by/ accountable to a board of elected members | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| There is a legal statute that determines the existence and composition of the NGB's board | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| NGBs can take decisions without the approval of the NGB's board | NA | no | NA | no | no | no | no | yes | yes | no | no | yes | no | no |
| The board of the NGB's is composed of professionals (paid staff) | NA | no | no | no | yes | no | no | no | no | no | no | NA | NA | no |
| There is a separate committee for elite sport and mass sport in the NGBs; this elite sport commission has a decisive role (decisions do not need to be approved by the board) | no | no | no | no | no | no | no | yes | no | no | no | no | no | no |

NA: data not available
Below are the key issues that emerged from the data:

a) **The extent to which the National Sport Agency (NSA) can influence the board composition** (e.g., as a condition to subsisidization): As various researchers have indicated (Taylor and O'Sullivan, 2009, Bayle and Robinson, 2007), NGBs are empowered to manage their sport independent from NSAs. Subsequently, NSAs only have a limited power to influence the NGB structure - specifically for elite sport purposes. Therefore, NGBs mostly apply their own principles of good governance and, while there is a legal requirement, the board composition is sport specific in each country with only a limited impact of the NSA for elite sport.

b) **Professional (paid) staff versus (non-paid) volunteering board members**: In all countries, the NGB board is the highest authority that makes major decisions on elite sport. As such, professional staff paid for executive management (such as preparing elite sport policy plans, developing elite athlete pathways in the sport, coordinating training and competition schedules, developing prioritization decisions) that is appointed in the NGBs usually cannot make decisions without the approval of the board. Except in Australia and Canada where there are differences across sports. NGB boards are typically composed of (non-paid) volunteers in all countries, except for some sports where professional (paid) staff are appointed. This is again sport specific in Australia and Portugal. In some countries, such as Belgium (FLA, WAL) and Canada, professional staff working in the NGBs can attend meetings but cannot (always) vote and influence decision making. Equally, the CEO or performance director is often precluded from voting.

c) Apart from South-Korea where separate NGBs for elite sport and grassroots sport exist, there is **no separate board for grassroots sports and elite sport** in any other sample countries. Consequently, board members (often elected members from grassroots sport clubs) are often not familiar with the high demands of elite sport. Specific sub-commissions for elite sport exist only in some countries and depending on sports (i.e., AUS, FLA-WAL, DEN, FIN, FRA, N-IRL, SUI) but these are mainly advisory and in most cases they do not have a decisive role.

These key findings open debates about the composition of the board in elite sport settings as well as the decision making power of the NGB (voluntary) boards compared to the professional staff taking care of executive management. The Australian system seems to be the most advanced in the way the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), the statutory authority for sport, tries to advocate the NGB governance. Since 2007, NGBs have been required to follow the
ASC’s guidelines on good governance to be considered for funding. This includes board composition, roles and powers; board processes; governance systems; board reporting and performance; member relationship and reporting; and ethical and responsible decision-making. While not advocating the adoption of any single model, the ASC advocate that each structure should be clearly documented with a clear delineation of the roles, responsibilities and powers of the board, management and each body involved. For example, one principle states that:

...each board should be structured to reflect the knowledge of the sport and sports industry; the board should be broadly reflective of the organisation’s key stakeholders but not at the expense of the board’s skills mix. Accordingly, the ASC advocates a board with the necessary skills to carry out its governance role rather than a representative board. Further, there should be no overlap in the powers of any two bodies or individuals in a governance structure.

Westerbeek and Brocket, Australian researchers

During the interviews, the local researchers collected data on the strengths and the weaknesses on the decision-making structure of NGB boards. Table 2 provides a summary overview.

Table 2: Strengths and weaknesses in the decision making structure of NGB boards (De Bosscher et al., 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- NGBs are the sport owners, they can operate independently and run their own businesses; this way each NGB can make decisions that are in the best interest of their own sport utilizing specialization and expert knowledge;</td>
<td>- Conflict in interest: NGB boards are composed of representatives from both grassroots and elite sport; elite sport is therefore not (always) a top priority for NGBs; important decisions (e.g. financial) can therefore be taken not for the best interest of elite sport;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Democratic and broadly based decision making structure;</td>
<td>- The level of expertise and the skills of board members for specific high performance decision-making can be sub-standard;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The board can be composed of (independent) professional experts from other fields, for example from the sport industry.</td>
<td>- Tensions between voluntary board members and professional technical staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of NGBs;
- **Compromising** (a decision making approach where compromises are made)
- No **competitive position** for board members (they remain elected);
- **Continuity** in decision making (e.g. when there is a high turnover of members on NGB boards);
- The constrain to ‘**change**’ (especially with voluntary board members); lack of innovation in some NGBs.

These findings are also well reflected in the responses of the performance directors (n=241) to the elite sport climate survey to their opinions on the statements in the next Figures\(^3\).

*Figure 1: Percentage of NGBs by country that indicated that the board of the NGB contains professionals (paid staff) with voting right*

Interestingly, only in Portugal almost all high performance directors indicated that their NGB-boards consist of paid professionals with voting rights. In all other countries, this is half of them or less (on average on third)

\(^3\) Note: France, Northern Ireland and Estonia did not complete the performance directors’ surveys.
The following figures also confirm that while a majority of the performance directors (PD) considers that the decision-making process in the NGBs regarding elite sport policies is efficiently organized (Figure 2), at least half of the NGBs in Australia, South-Korea, Brazil and Japan find that the elite sport operation within the governing body is working professionally but the board of directors is not (Figure 3).

**Figure 2:** Percentage of performance directors that (totally) AGREE with the following statement: “In my national governing body, the decision-making process regarding elite sport policies is efficiently organized”

![Figure 2](image1)

**Figure 3:** Percentage of performance directors that (totally) AGREES on the following statement: “The elite sport operation within the governing body is working professionally but the board of directors is not”

![Figure 3](image2)
Furthermore, on average only 30% also finds that the NGB-board is composed of experts who understand elite sport policy and development well; 30% of the performance directors also disagreed (Figure 4).

*Figure 3: Percentage of performance directors that (totally) DISAGREE with the following statement: “The board of my national governing body is comprised of experts who understand elite sport policy and development well”*

Overall, these figures offer striking evidence and clearly illustrate that the professionalisation of NGBs is not always in line with developments of the boards of NGBs.

**Discussion**

The results presented in this paper reveal that there are strengths and weaknesses associated with volunteer-based NGB boards that influence decision making in elite sport. Some strengths relate to the ‘sport ownership’ (i.e., agency theory), the existence of a democratic and broadly based decision making structure and composition of (independent) professional experts from other fields (for example from the sport industry). Some of the weaknesses identified were the sometimes low level of expertise of board members due to their background and the tensions between voluntary board members and professional technical staff of NGBs compromising the decision making and a lack of innovation in some NGBs. These findings provide some evidence that confirms previous literature that the board’s characteristics may influence organisational effectiveness (Taylor and O'Sullivan, 2009). Some authors stated that organisational performance in NGBs is intrinsically linked to a paradox, because it cannot be understood
without taking into account simultaneous tensions that exist between paid staff and volunteers, between elite and mass sport, between public and private funds and between societal and commercial cultures (Shilbury and Moore, 2006, Winand et al., 2010). These tensions were clearly notable in the sample NGBs of this study and can be summarized as follows.

**Background or expertise of board members:** The most significant weakness with important ramifications to elite sport was the conflict of interest. This conflict resonated within the realization that elite sport is not (always) a top priority for NGB boards. Especially, because the elected (volunteering) board members are club members from grassroots sport and competition sport – but elite sport is different.

A key concern based on the results is that it is likely that board members who are elected by community/grassroots sport clubs are potentially not familiar with the high demands of elite sport or have other interests that are more aligned with grassroots sport. Specific sub-commissions for elite sport exist only in some countries and their purposes is mainly advisory and with no decisive roles. This creates tensions between elite sport and grassroots sport on the one hand and between professional staff (e.g., the HP director) and voluntary board members on the other. In most countries there are sport specific differences in this regard, but generally the board of the NGB’s is typically composed of non-paid volunteers. As explained at the introduction, elite sport requires a high level of specialization and an understanding of how to manage HP is a requirement for people who make decisions at that level (De Bosscher et al., 2015). If the members within these boards do not understand the needs and requirements of elite sport well enough, the boards are likely to make decisions based on their own interest or on what they believe is good rather then what is really needed. Similarly, there was a sentiment that directors can be great managers but may not understand elite sport enough – and cannot make accurate decisions. Perhaps when shaping up the board consideration should be given in including expertise or representatives that have prior knowledge of HP sport, such as a former athlete or an elite level coach.

**Tensions between voluntary board members and professional technical staff:** Given that the boards were often composed of people representing (club) members at a grassroots level it is possible that this creates tensions with elite sport. Specifically, as already explained, the boards in most countries are composed of voluntary club members; these members tend to have other interests (many times to directly benefit their own club and not higher levels of participation or elite sport) and in most cases they lack the depth knowledge that is needed to understand elite sport. A trend over recent times in NGBs has been to hire staff to specifically
develop elite sport. These staff may consist of HP directors and several other elite sport staff members. These people work on a daily basis, in a professional way, and in various capacities, to manage HP sport (e.g., elite sport policy plans, strategy and implementation of HP plans).

Invariably, an NGB would have to sometimes make decisions (e.g., funding priorities or long-term development) that the board will not like; decisions that are related to the global sporting arms race, because the level of competition is so much citius, altius, fortius. Consequently, what happens often is the professional staff may develop good reasons to change policy directions or to make certain funding or other decisions, but the boards decide otherwise. This finding suggests that critical reflection is needed to clarify whether the organisation of current elite sport and sport for all are sustainable for the long term. As they are further growing apart that may require separate organisational structures.

**Study limitations and conclusions**

The fact that the project was highly dependent on the cooperation of sports authorities and Olympic Committees, which had not necessarily endorsed the research in all countries, made it challenging to access all respondent groupings in some countries. In some countries, it was hard to collect all information for all Pillars or sources. France was unable to participate in the surveys due to final approvals arriving after the data collection deadlines and the Estonia and Northern Ireland did not survey their performance directors. Nevertheless, the results help draw several conclusions. First, there was widespread acceptance that the nature of boards of NGBs should move away from a traditional representative structure in favor of a more focused, corporate style board. Central to this is a belief that boards of NGBs should focus on board members who bring specific business skills to the board. However, it should be noted that within such a restructure, respondents representing NGBs argued strongly for some representative element to remain on the board so as to avoid membership alienation. Winand et al. (2010) and Winand et al. (2012) suggested that, depending on financial and human resources, sport governing bodies need different approaches to achieve their strategic goals. If they have experienced staff and large or sufficient financial resources, they should be proactive and adapt services to membership as well as developing elite structures or involve paid staff in the decision-making process. If they have financial difficulties and/or non experienced staff, they should invest in specific activities, utilize the experience of their volunteer(s) and support their sport clubs to develop elite structures and innovative activities. This point is significant because as the board is democratically composed to be representative, the NGBs might not attract the right skills to their boards – in this case – people who
understand elite sport sufficiently well. Accordingly, in elite sport, the board should possibly be composed different from other fields, such as grassroots -where it may be all right to have club members and some business people; in elite sport, the problem is that people want to take business like decisions that do not always advance elite sport development. Second, the findings suggested that the key practical conflicts around the board’s representative role concerned recruitment to the board (i.e., whether members should be appointed on the basis of their skills or elected through membership structures) and behavior on the board (i.e., whether acting as representatives of particular constituencies compromised board members’ abilities to act in ‘the best interests’ of the organisation). It also suggested, in light of previous research, that the issue is not one of board composition alone. In particular, given the gap in research on governance in high performance sport in relation to NGBs’ organisational effectiveness (Winand et al., 2010), an analysis of board skills, knowledge and understanding of elite sport and how that impacts the NGB strategy (De Bosscher et al., 2015), the involvement of (former) elite athletes in the decision making process of NGBs (Thibault et al., 2010), and an analysis of strategic priorities made by the board in the light of their own individual experience are recommended areas for future research that would advance the organisational development and governance of elite sport.

References


Acknowledgement

The coordination of the SPLISS research was funded by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

SPLISS has largely depended on institutional investments to ensure the national coordination of this large-scale project. The SPLISS consortium partners did not seek any financial contribution from the participating nations as a return for the massive coordinating work. All such costs were met by the Vrije Universiteit Brussels and supported by the consortium members and engaged researchers from the partner countries. The authors would like to thank the policy institutions that funded the national data collection and contributed to assistance in data analysis (see De Bosscher et al., 2015, p24-29 for an overview).

The authors would like to thank the dedicated research partners involved in the SPLISS-2.0 study, among others (sorted by country): Hans Westerbeek and Camilla Brockett (Australia, Victoria University), Popi Sotiriadou and Ben Corbett (Australia, Griffith University) ● Stephanie De Croock and Jasper Truyen (Belgium (Flanders), Vrije Universiteit Brussel) Mathieu Winand (Stirling University) and Thierry Zintz (Belgium (Wallonia), Université catholique de Louvain) ● Maria Tereza Silveira Bohme & team (Brazil, University of São Paulo) ● David Legg & team (Canada, Mount Royal University) ● Henrik Brandt, Rasmus K. Storm, Lau Toft and Nynne Mortensen (Denmark, Danish Institute for Sports Studies & University of Southern Denmark) ● Eerik Hanni (Estonia, National Audit Office of Estonia) ● Patrick Mignon and Emanuel Lefore (France, Institut National du Sport et de l'Éducation Physique-INSEP) ● Jari Länsä, Jarmo Mäkinen and Mikko Kärmeniemi (Finland, KIHU - Research institute for Olympic Sports) ● Yoshiyuki Mano, Hiroaki Funahashi and team (Japan, Waseda University) ● Maarten van Bottenburg and Bake Dijk (the Netherlands, Utrecht University) ● Simon Shibli, David Baret (Sheffield Hallam University) and Paul Donnelly (Sport Northern Ireland, UK) ● Pedro Guedes De Carvalho and Rui Canelas (Portugal, Beira Interior University) ● Anna Vilanova, Eduard Inglés and team (Spain, National Institute of Physical Education of Catalonia, INEFC) ● Eunha Koh (South-Korea, Korea Institute of Sport Science) ● Hippolyt Kempf, Marco Stopper & Andreas, Christophe Weber (Switzerland, Swiss Federal Institute of Sport Magglingen SFISM).