

Speaking notes for Rowland Jack for EPAS and Italian Ministry of Sport conference on integrity in sport

Session at 10.30am on 7 December - Partnerships for implementation of good governance

Good morning. It's a pleasure to be with you today. Thank you to Council of Europe for invitation and the Italian Department of Sport for hosting the event.

We have heard from the previous speakers about a variety of steps taken by governments, the IOC sports federations and international organisations to implement governance frameworks in sport.

I have been working as a consultant in sports governance since establishing I Trust Sport in 2013, after working at my "home" Olympic and Paralympic Games in London.

Some of the approaches to implement better governance to mitigate risks of corruption include:

- a) Education
- b) Expert support
- c) Governance assessment

I'll mention each briefly in turn.

a) Regarding education

The Council of Europe, IOC and others have produced educational guidance on specific topics.

For example, the IOC Gender Equality Review project starting in 2017 resulted in specific recommendations for women in sport relating to participation, portrayal, funding, representation in leadership and more.

Anti-doping education programmes are well-established, delivered by different partners. Sometimes training is organised by sport, sometimes by country, or perhaps for participants at a particular event, such as a world championship.

b) The second approach to implementing better governance is via expert support, which is usually tailored to a specific organisation

Most often this is requested or paid for by the organisation itself, or mandated by a funder or umbrella organisation.

The aim is to address recognised governance weaknesses, usually in response to a crisis and external pressure. One high profile example was the International Biathlon Union. Following a criminal investigation into their former leadership, in 2018 the IBU appointed an External Review Commission. They proposed a set of reforms, including term limits and the delegation of 'judicial' decisions to an external authority. The changes were later approved at the IBU Congress.

In the UK, I was involved in a project to support several National Federations which were going to receive Lottery funding for the first time ahead of Tokyo 2020. They included the NFs for skateboarding, surfing and others. The idea was to get the NFs ready to receive public funding to protect the investment and ensure it would be spent effectively.

c) The third and final approach to improving governance is by means of governance assessment or audit. We have heard some information about work in Italy in this area.

Governance assessment is an audit exercise but broader in scope than financial audit.

It is most often commissioned by an organisation with an accountability relationship to the one being assessed. For example, it might be the regulator, like WADA or an umbrella body such as ASOIF. Or it could be the funding body which commissions the audit, such as a government agency or the National Olympic Committee. Audits have also been carried out by NGOs that can impact on the reputation of the organisations being studied.

There are a variety of possible methods. There are inevitable compromises or trade-offs in an audit process, described by an author called Michael Power in his book *Audit Society: Rituals of Verification* (1999).

First, there may be an expectation gap between what we would like an audit to uncover and what is realistic. Even very expensive, tightly regulated financial audits do not always identify when an organisation is in trouble.

Next there is a trade-off between proximity and independence. People inside an organisation know it best but relying purely on self-assessment may not produce the most accurate or useful results. At the other end of the scale, fully independent auditors may not know enough about the organisation to assess it properly.

The ASOIF study I am involved with tries to manage this compromise. International Federations provide the information themselves in a questionnaire but it is independently verified for accuracy. The work is commissioned by ASOIF, a membership organisation, so there is a degree of separation from the organisations being studied but it's not fully independent.

As every organisation is unique there is an argument that any audit should be tailored specifically to the body concerned but then there would be no opportunity for comparison. At the other extreme, if we just have one standard for all types of sports bodies we would fail to recognise the wide differences in size, scale, national legislation and so on.

The Code for Sports Governance in the UK has 3 tiers depending on the amount of funding received – an updated version has been published this morning. The IPACS Benchmark Guidelines will provide guidance for organisations described as “emerging”, “developing” and “advanced”. If we want to see governance measures cascaded to national, regional and local level, the requirements and any assessment process will need to be proportionate.

Lastly, there is the question of resources available for an audit, whether in terms of funding or internal staff time. With more resources you might achieve a more thorough assessment but there has to be a practical limit.

In conclusion, before I hand you back to the panel, to improve governance in sport and mitigate the risk of corruption, we can use a mix of education, expert support and assessment processes. There are roles for many different stakeholders and IPACS can provide us with valuable tools.

Experience shows that external organisations need real leverage to drive meaningful change, such as regulatory power, control over funding or reputational impact.

Thank you.