

FEI GOVERNANCE TOOLS FOR NATIONAL FEDERATIONS

A. Introduction

National Federations (NFs) are key for the delivery of equestrian sport in their countries; they are crucial for providing the competition framework, from the grassroots to the international level and for administering the sport.

Given the different dimensions of sports nowadays it is required to generally modernise NFs structures. This can be achieved by professionalising their organisations so to provide a more efficient and effective operation. Also, by improving their structures and systems, NFs could develop a winning culture that will enable them to grow equestrian sport in their country and worldwide.

The FEI acknowledges that there is no one-size-fits-all solution and that the FEI NFs members vary considerably in terms of history, size, staff, material resources, number of competitions, riders, horses, etc. For this reason, this Governance Tools must be read keeping in mind the reality of each NF and are provided as instruments to scrutinise themselves to check if their structures and governance include suggested minimum standards.

B. Good Governance for NFs: getting started

The power to govern the FEI is fundamentally vested in its member NFs who exercise that power directly through a system of representation (principle of democracy). For that reason, it is essential that similar principles and standards of good governance already adopted by the FEI are implemented and executed by its member NFs who ultimately and collectively govern horse sport worldwide.

Generally speaking NFs are private legal entities created under national laws that come with a variety of different legal structures (in fact, in some countries NFs are purely private associations while in other countries, even though being private organisations, they may undertake public or quasi-public functions by delegation). While in some countries NFs are abundantly regulated by national laws that impose minimum requirements in order to be recognised by the public authorities, in some other countries fewer legal requirements are applicable to sports organisations in comparison to other legal organisations.

In addition to any national legal requirements, it is suggested that NFs look at their structures with the aim of analysing their main principles or pillars of good governance.

These main principles or pillars of good governance can be identified as:

- 1) Transparency;
- 2) Integrity;
- 3) Democracy;
- 4) Development & Solidarity;
- 5) Control Mechanisms.

Governance standards should be improved and introduced into all NFs as a priority. NFs must treat governance as a critical element of the operation of the NF and this priority should be communicated and agreed by all senior staff and board members of the NF.

In order to assist NFs in assessing and improving their governance, the FEI has put together a set of different tools, namely:

1. The present Memo, which generally explain the main reasons for NFs implementing minimum standards of good governance in their organisations;
2. A Governance Questionnaire, which will help NFs to identify main areas of good governance in their organisations;
3. A Model of Statutes with guidance notes, to assist NFs in putting effective Statutes in place to form its governance foundation; and
4. Model Job Description of an NF Secretary General.

These governance tools seek to provide guidance and practical advice to the NFs on the structures, systems and processes that are needed in order to operate effectively and efficiently.

However, these governance tools must not be seen as the definitive answer but as tools to help NFs: 1) with the evaluation of their structures and the revision of their Statutes, and; 2) with the process of continuing development towards greater effectiveness, efficiency and independence in how NFs deliver their services to their stakeholders.

C. Conclusions

NFs have a direct interest in ensuring that they have in place the systems and structures necessary to lead and develop the equestrian sport in their countries, whether in receipt of public or private funding or not.

Modernisation at this stage should be driven by NFs themselves with support from the FEI when appropriate.

Adhering to a set of governance principles carries the following tangible and intangible benefits:

- It reflects the essential value of sport such as fairness and equality.
- It contributes to ensure the optimal development of the sport in their countries.
- It ensures more operational autonomy by preventing interference from public authorities.
- It decreases the NFs vulnerability to legal actions.
- It enhances credibility and increases the NFs ability to attract and retain sponsors.
- It is a guarantee of responsible behaviour and a protection against self-interested behaviours.
- It guarantees a fair distribution of financial resources amongst its members.
- It protects NFs against corruption and fraud in the performance of its functions.
- It improves the assistance to IFs in the fulfilment of their objectives.
- It ensures harmony and peace for stakeholders and contributes to the success of the equestrian sport.