

**Title:** The professionalisation of international sport federations in Switzerland: its beginnings and the reasons behind it

**Authors:** Josephine Clausen, Emmanuel Bayle

Institut des Sciences du Sport, Université de Lausanne, Switzerland

**Abstract:**

**Introduction:**

Within the last 20 years, international sport federations (IF) have become (so far) undefined hybrids: sport as a common good and with a societal mission, but also source of business and expandable markets. In the course of adaptation to new contexts, IFs' nature often changes.

Applying a systems-based approach, the study seeks to understand the beginnings as well as the external and internal reasons of professionalisation within IFs. From an internal point of view, one has to ask which internal factors promote or hinder processes of professionalisation? Who are the central actors/initiators of professionalisation processes and which events are essential for initiation process of professionalisation? In which way have member organisations (national/continental federations) influenced processes of professionalisation?

Some research can be found on the professionalisation of national sport federations and their organisational change (i.e. Amis, Slack & Hinings, 2004; Griginov & Sandanski, 2008; Fahrner, 2008, 2009a, 2009b), the transition from volunteer staff to professional staff (i.e. Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011; Thibault, Slack & Hinings, 1991) as well as the consequences of professionalisation on governance (i.e. Ferkins, Shilbury & McDonald, 2005; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2008; Dowling, Edwards & Washington, 2014). There is very little research on governance, management and professionalisation of IFs (Arcioni & Bayle, 2012; Mittag & Putzmann, 2009). Moreover, in many studies, professionalisation is reduced to the perspective of paid staff. Our research aims to develop new perspectives to analyse and understand processes of professionalisation. In a first approach, we therefore want to understand the reasons behind the process of professionalisation in international sport federations.

**Methods:**

As part of an exploratory study, 9 semi-structured interviews have been conducted with experts (i.e. general secretaries, executive directors) from umbrella sport organisations such as SportAccord, WADA, ASOIF, as well as with sport leaders having left a considerable imprint in the world of sport federations during the last years.

The results of the interviews and official documents (annual reports, factsheets, criteria catalogues) have been compared with existing literature on the subject (revue articles, dissertations, reports, etc.) revealing important turning points in the professionalization process of IFs: in 1992, each of the 25 participating federations was allocated \$1.5 Millions (first Olympic revenue-sharing); in 2012 (London Games), this tendency culminated in an all-time high totalling \$526 Millions to be shared between 28 federations. Parallel to this, the commercialisation of mega events (sponsoring, TV rights) is a general trend visible amongst all federations (the UCI generated KCHF 16.6 via its World Championships in 2013). Depending on the strategy managers and executive boards adopt and the political context, federations develop different forms of professionalization (i.e. no top-down process of professionalisation of the international sporting and administrative headquarters to continental and national levels). First exploratory studies show that there is no systemic approach to the professionalization process of international sport federations.

**Discussion/Conclusion:**

1. Hypothesis: Sport federations' professionalisation is mainly focussed on international federations, with little or no expansion on continental and national level.
2. Hypothesis: Professionalisation processes and forms differ according to the style of governance.
3. Hypothesis: The professionalisation of sport federations' headquarters mainly concerns three departments: administration, marketing and legal department.

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