

Introduction to the Guidebook

“Change or be changed” (Bach, 2013) is the motto which means that strategic management is needed to keep track of the changes of the environment. The Olympic Movement, led by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), established Olympic Agenda 2020, and extended it to Agenda 2020+5 to capture current challenges, such as digitalisation, attracting the youth, or strengthening solidarity. The world is changing quicker than wanted and provides ever stronger disruptions – as can be seen by the COVID-19 pandemic and its manifold consequences for sport and the society, or the Russian invasion of Ukraine causing a new world order and at least several millions of refugees.

In response to the new and complex challenges facing society, National Olympic Committees (NOCs) must act strategically; for example, by developing professional and sustainable action plans. A proactive and creative mindset is essential. This can be increasing partnerships or cooperations with stakeholders from government agencies to the private sector. The work with stakeholders, communications, and public affairs becomes increasingly important. This book covers the most important topics of the ERASMUS+ (2020-2022) “RINGS” project (Road towards Innovative Governance of NOCs and Grassroots Sport organisations). Over the past decade, it has become clear that many Sport organisations do not have a good governance structure, as was covered in the previous ERASMUS+ (2015-2016) “SIGGS” project (Support the implementation of good governance in sport). Both projects, led by the EU Office of European Olympic Committees, show that it is also essential that NOCs demonstrate high standards of governance, in order to maintain confidence in their activities and to protect the integrity of the Olympic sport movement.

NOCs should draw the right and wise conclusions from the many current changes, and then aim to turn the challenges and inherent threats into opportunities. This book aims to assist in identifying changes and providing tools to implement them, as well as analysing the situation and the respective NOC, in order to enable the various boards and managers to identify opportunities by avoiding threats and minimising risks. To do so, an NOC should plan for its future. The IOC started that initiative by launching the Olympic Agenda 2020+5, based on the feedback it received from its many stakeholders, including the NOCs.

Since every NOC has a different organisational and communicational culture, as well as different issues and challenges, each one has to adapt the tools, processes, and cases that are presented in this book to its particular needs and requirements. Strategic planning will help to successfully realise the goals of the NOCs.

Strategic Planning in a Nutshell

Strategic planning is widely used by organisations, as it is an integral part of strategy. It has several advantages that will:

1. provide a clear, coordinated, and prioritised focus for your NOC;
2. engage and inspire external stakeholders of your NOC;
3. motivate NOC staff by providing a clear purpose for each activity.

Strategic planning helps to position an NOC, through prioritising its use of resources according to identified goals, as set out in its statutes, in an effort to guide its direction and development over a period of time (Bryson, 1995). After the planning, strategic management refers to the implementation of a strategic plan that is designed to achieve long-term goals, and the allocation of the necessary resources to meet these goals (Ansoff et al., 2019; Robinson, 2020).

In an environment that is changing at an increasingly faster rate, strategic thinking and action have, in turn, become increasingly important. These factors have been adopted by public and not-for-profit organisations to enable them to successfully adapt to future changes (Mintzberg, 1989; Bryson, 1995; Wilson, 1990; Freeman, 2010; Courtney, 2002; Allison & Kaye, 1997). In this book, the aim is to use the best of these adoptions, and in a particular way that would best fit to the Olympic sport system, specifically the NOCs. Such as Robinson and Minikin (2011) we try to develop strategic capacity in Olympic sport organisations.

Practical Issues Offered in this Guidebook

This guidebook offers many practical applications, recommendations, and training sessions via workshops and case studies. The workshops should be adopted to each of the NOC's particular needs and specific culture. Case studies will end with questions that shall direct you to the issues which are worthy of reflection.

In this book we offer the following formats:

- Illustrations:** These are best practices from other NOCs, that are used to illustrate good solutions. Here, you can learn from other experiences, bearing in mind the different culture, different professional environment, and different organisational development of the NOC.
- Case studies:** These are provided for training purposes. Besides describing a particular case, they also include questions or study activities.
- Workshops:** These are proposed activity units where the processes are explained in a “hands on” way, and in detail.
- Recommendations:** Whenever an NOC had found a solution to a problem that could, potentially, be copied, we provide it as a recommendation.
- Fact boxes:** These contain important explanations, or definitions of terms and facts.

This guidebook cannot give assistance about which tool and which recommendation are most important to a particular NOC, because they depend solely on the development of an NOC, and on which assessments an NOC has already achieved in the past.

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