

A VOTE WITH A WEIGHT

An analysis of alternatives to the one-nation-one-vote system in international sport

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Peter Forsberg



Play the Game

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Executive Summary

This research paper focuses on weighted voting systems in international sports federations. Only seven out of 35 Olympic international sports federations have a weighted voting system, whereas the remaining federations use the 'one nation, one vote'-system.

However, the 'one nation, one vote'-system is often described as one of the main risk factors of facilitating corruption and vote-buying, thus threatening the integrity of the international sport. To explore alternatives, the research paper focuses on weighted voting systems. This is done by looking into the seven international federations that use a weighted voting system. These federations are Badminton World Federation (BWF), World Rowing (WR), World Taekwondo (WT), Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), International Ski Federation (FIS), International Tennis Federation (ITF), and International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF).

The research paper focuses on how the weighted voting systems in these seven federations are composed, what criteria are used to determine voting power, why the seven federations are using a weighted voting system, and how the weighted voting systems influence the member associations' voting power.

The research paper shows a great variation in how weighted voting systems are composed. Five federations (Badminton World Federation, World Rowing, World Taekwondo, International Ski Federation, and International Ice Hockey Federation) have a system where objective criteria are used to determine voting power. One federation (International Tennis Federation) has a system where voting power is determined through an overall assessment based on four criteria. There are, however, no objective measures as to when criteria are met.

Finally, one federation (Union Cycliste Internationale) has a system based on confederations instead of member nations – and while it is different from the 'one nation, one vote'-system, it is in essence, not a weighted voting system, because delegates representing confederations each have one vote.

The criteria used in the systems primarily concern the national member associations' involvement in the sport at the international level. This is done by linking member associations' voting power to different aspects of international involvement. The most used criteria when it comes to international involvement are participation in international tournaments, hosting of events, and sporting performance at the international level. A few federations also focus on the role of the sport at a national level.

There are two primary reasons for the federations to have a weighted voting system. First, federations argue that the voting power of member associations must reflect their involvement in the sport. The member associations who contribute most to the sport at the international level should also have a greater influence on political decisions. Second, some

federations argue that the weighted voting system promotes good governance and decreases the risk of vote-buying and corruption.

Finally, the research project shows that there is a great difference between the systems in terms of the distribution of voting power. Within the International Tennis Federation and Badminton World Federation, the weighted voting system has a great impact on the distribution of votes. The member associations with the highest number of votes within these systems are assigned 3.9 (International Tennis Federation) and 2.9 (Badminton World Federation) times as much voting power, respectively, compared to a situation where 'one nation, one vote' would be applied. Within World Rowing, World Taekwondo, and the International Ski Federation the weighted voting system has a moderate effect. At World Rowing and the International Ski Federation, the member associations with the most votes are assigned 1.7 (World Rowing) and 1.8 (International Ski Federation) times as much voting power compared to a situation where 'one nation, one vote' was applied. At World Taekwondo, 80 member associations are not entitled to vote. Within a 'one nation, one vote' system, these member associations would be able to vote and each have 0.5 per cent of the total votes at World Taekwondo. Within the International Ice Hockey Federation, the weighted voting system has little effect in practice as 51 out of 53 members are assigned two votes, while only two members are assigned one vote.

A few limitations of the research project are relevant to emphasise. First, there are some differences between the federations regarding which decisions member associations vote on. For example, in some international federations, member nations vote on hosting rights for World Championships, while this decision is made by elected council members in other federations. The link between vote distribution and which issues member associations are allowed to decide on is important because it has practical implications.

Second, it has not been possible to investigate what impact the weighted voting system has on corruption and vote-buying. More research is needed to uncover whether – and possibly how – weighted voting systems are effective avenues to better governance of international sports federations.

Two additional points related to good governance are relevant to emphasise. First, good governance of international sports organisations concerns more than just the voting system. This is illustrated by the 'Sports Governance Observer' (Geeraert, 2015) which is a benchmarking tool for good governance in international sports federations. The Sports Governance Observer focusses on governance criteria within four dimensions: 'Transparency', 'Democratic process', 'Checks and balances', and 'Solidarity'. It is primarily the theme concerning 'Democratic process' which involves the voting system, but this is just one element out of four concerning good governance of international sports organisation.

Secondly, the seven federations included in this analysis achieve different scores on the Sports Governance Observer index (Geeraert, 2015) and their ranking among the 35 federations in the observer varies. The International Ski Federation and the Badminton World Federation are ranked third and fourth, respectively, on the index. They have a voting

system with a medium and high influence on the distribution of votes, respectively. On the other hand, the International Tennis Federation also has a voting system with a high influence on the distribution of votes, but it receives the lowest score among the seven federations in this analysis and is ranked 30th out of the 35 federations on the Sports Governance Observer index. The seven federations' rankings on the Sports Governance Observer index show that the governance level includes more variables than just the voting system. The voting system is one aspect among others and having a weighted voting system does not guarantee good governance.

Introduction

Democracy is the most widespread form of government in the Western world. Democracy means 'rule by the people', and in democratic states, people can ideally choose their leaders through elections. The origin of democracy goes back to ancient Greece where the first ideas and debates about democracy took place. Over time, there have been countless debates on what constitutes 'the people' – *demos* – (who are allowed to vote), while the principle of equal voting power among individual citizens entitled to vote (one person, one vote) is less disputed.

Democracy is not just a form of government in nation-states, but also a principle anchored in the international sports system. The international sports system is a hierarchical chain running from international sports federations, to national member associations, to local organisations/sports clubs. The international sports federations are the supreme governing bodies of the sports at the international level (Geeraert, 2015).

Most international sports federations were founded in the first part of the 20th century typically by a handful of national member associations to govern the rules of a particular sport (Geeraert, 2015). The principle of democratic decision making was implemented in many of these international sports federations using the 'one nation (one association/federation), one vote'-principle. The principle gave all the federation's member associations one vote to cast in elections, and voting power did not rely on factors such as years of membership or the number of athletes in national member associations.

The key advantage of the 'one nation, one vote'-system is – according to Jürgen Mittag from the German Sport University Cologne – that all sports federations are “deemed equal and that a vote offers every federation the chance to declare and register ‘one’s opinion’”¹.

The principle of 'one nation, one vote' has a strong appeal to international sports federations. Of the 35 international sports federations in the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) and the Association of International Olympic Winter Sports Federations (AOIWF), 28 federations use the principle of 'one nation, one vote'.

However, the 'one nation, one vote'-system has shown to have limitations. According to Jürgen Mittag, there are tremendous differences across nations. One example is football, where the German Football Association (DFB) has 6.3 million registered players, while the British Virgin Islands has just 435 registered players². However, each association has just one vote at the FIFA congress. This constellation has shown to foster the dark sides of sport such as corruption or vote buying.

¹ <https://www.playthegame.org/news/news-articles/2013/sport-and-the-one-nation-one-vote-system/>

² <https://www.playthegame.org/news/news-articles/2013/sport-and-the-one-nation-one-vote-system/>

On that background, Mittag and Putzmann (2013) conclude in a study that the differences in size and composition between member associations within international sports federations makes it relevant to weight the vote of the representatives.

This research paper continues on this path by looking at seven international sports federations who use a weighted voting system. The objective is to get more information about the composition of the weighted voting systems and gain insight into the advantages seen from the view of the federations. The aim of the research paper is to fuel discussions and considerations about voting systems and their role at international sports federations.

The research paper is divided into three parts. In the first part, we explain the methodology used. In the second part, we focus on the weighted voting systems and look deeper into the composition of the systems, the criteria used by the federations, and the potential challenges of the system as seen by the federations. Finally, we discuss the weighted voting systems. We focus on why federations have a weighted voting system, how the systems are composed, what criteria are used, and how the distribution of votes influence the voting power of the member associations.

Methodology

This research paper focuses on international sports federations with a weighted voting system within the 'Association of Summer Olympic International Federations' (ASIOF) or the 'Association of International Olympic Winter Sports Federations' (AWOIF). 28 international sports federations are represented at the Summer Olympic Games and are members of ASOIF, while seven international sports federations are represented at the Winter Olympics Games and are members of AWOIF.

The voting principles of all 35 international sports federations have been reviewed in order to identify federations with a weighted voting system. A weighted voting system is defined as a system that does not give member associations the same number of votes, which is the case in the 'one nation, one vote'-system.

In total, seven international sports federations have a weighted voting system. Five of these federations are represented at the Summer Olympics and two are represented at the Winter Olympics. The seven federations are:

- Badminton World Federation (Summer Olympics)
- International Ice Hockey Federation (Winter Olympics)
- International Ski Federation (Winter Olympics)
- International Tennis Federation (Summer Olympics)
- Union Cycliste Internationale (Summer Olympics)
- World Rowing (Summer Olympics)
- World Taekwondo (Summer Olympics)

Desk research was undertaken to uncover the weighted voting system and the criteria used to determine voting power. The voting systems and the criteria are described in the statutes of the federations, which were retrieved from the website of each federation.

Additionally, all seven international sports federations were invited to take part in an interview concerning their voting system (see the invitation, appendix 1). All federations except the International Tennis Federation and the International Ice Hockey Federation participated in the interviews.

The interviews with a representative from each federation were conducted by email or online. An interview guide was conducted to structure the interviews. The interview guide focused on four themes: 1) Criteria used to determine voting power, 2) reasons for and structure of the voting system, 3) adoption of the voting system, and 4) recommendations for other federations. The interview guide is included in appendix 2.

The historical records of the development of the voting systems were also a focus in the interviews. However, it has been difficult to uncover the history of the voting system as the decision to use a weighted voting system in most cases dates back many years and was not remembered by the representatives. Desk research has been performed to uncover the

history of the system, but in most cases, it has not been possible to complete a thorough mapping of the history.

Review of the seven weighted voting systems

In this section of the research paper, we review the weighted voting systems in each of the seven federations in turn. We start by describing the purpose of the federations and their organisational structure before we focus on their voting systems. We briefly review the history of voting in the federation after which we will focus on which criteria are currently used to determine voting power. We will also describe the distribution of votes within the systems and possible challenges to the system.

Badminton World Federation (BWF)

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) is recognised as the governing body of badminton. The International Badminton Federation, as it was originally called, was established in 1934 by nine founding member associations. Badminton World Federation is organised as a not-for-profit association and currently has 187 full national member associations³.

The governing structure of the Badminton World Federation consists of the annual general meeting (or the extraordinary general meeting), the council, and the executive board. The annual general meeting is held every year and it is the highest authority of the Badminton World Federation.

A weighted voting system is used to decide matters at the annual general meeting. The weighted voting system is important, according to Badminton World Federation, because it makes it possible to reflect “the level of involvement and the contribution to the development of badminton” in the voting power of each member association. Member associations with higher levels of involvement and contribution to the collective development of badminton are given more voting power.

Originally Badminton World Federation used a voting system with equal voting power for founding members, but when new member associations joined, the system changed to a two-tier voting system with different voting power for founding members and other members. This system has evolved over time and today five different criteria are used to determine voting power. These criteria are explained below.

According to the statutes of the Badminton World Federation, several issues are decided on at the annual general meeting including the election of officers (the president, the deputy president, and six vice presidents) and other members of the council. Officers and the council are elected every four years before the Summer Olympic Games. The annual general meeting also has the authority to approve proposals from member associations and amendments to the constitution and the laws of badminton. The hosting of World Championships is not decided at the annual general meeting but by the council. Voting may take place by show of hands, by voice or by secret ballot depending on the issue (secret ballot is used for elections of officers and council).

³ The seven international sports federations have different names for their members. For uniformity we use the term ‘member associations’ when referring to the members unless stated otherwise.

Criteria in the voting system

The weighted voting system was last adjusted in 2012, and in the current voting system, all member associations have at least one vote but can earn four extra votes depending on their involvement and contribution to international badminton. The individual criteria and their reasoning are explained below:

- *Membership Criterion:* One vote for being a member of the Badminton World Federation. The criterion reflects that it is a basic right of every member association to be able to vote at the annual general meetings.
- *Popularity Criterion:* One extra vote for member associations with at least 10,000 registered members in their national association within each year of the assessment period. The criterion aims to reflect the size and popularity of badminton in the country of the member association.
- *Participation Criterion:* One extra vote for member associations who have participated in six out of ten events⁴ during the assessment period (four years). The criterion aims to reflect the member associations' active participation in international tournaments, and the member associations with a high level of participation are given an additional vote to reflect their involvement and contribution in tournaments.
- *Top Player Criterion:* One extra vote for member associations that have at least one player across disciplines (singles, doubles, mixed doubles) in the top 40 of the world ranking used for the qualification to the latest Olympic Games. The criterion seeks to reward member associations who have developed successful top players.
- *Hosting Criterion:* One extra vote for member associations that organise international-level events⁵ in at least three of the four years of the assessment period. The criterion seeks to award member associations who organise tournaments.

The voting power of member associations is decided in four-year cycles (the assessment period), which according to the Badminton World Federation is an important part of the system. The four-year assessment period determines the voting strength for each member association for the subsequent four-year cycle which gives stability to the system.

The voting strength for each member association is shown in the 'Record of Voting Strength' published on the Badminton World Federation corporate website. The current voting strength is fixed from 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2024, with this same period being the assessment period for the following four years.

According to the 'Record of Voting Strength' 187 member associations are eligible to vote. 132 member associations have one vote, 16 member associations have two votes, 13 member associations have three votes, 7 member associations have four votes, and 19 member associations have five votes.

⁴ See *Record of Voting Strength* on the BWF website for relevant events.

⁵ See *Record of Voting Strength* on the BWF website for relevant events.

The Badminton World Federation stresses that the voting system is overall seen as working very well and according to the Badminton World Federation the system is accepted by the member associations as a reasonable and fair way of calculating votes and providing influence on the Badminton World Federation's governance structure.

According to the Badminton World Federation, the main challenge with the current system is the 'Popularity Criterion', as member associations have different ways of counting the number of registered players. Some member associations have formal registries, while other member associations make estimates, which makes the assessment of the criterion more subjective. However, this is not seen as a crucial issue by the Badminton World Federation, as it is not determined based on an exact number of players, but whether a member association has more than 10,000 players. Nevertheless, the Badminton World Federation is looking into ways of potentially making this assessment based on a more objective measurement of the size/popularity of badminton in the specific member association.

International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF)

The International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) was founded in 1908 and is an independent non-profit organisation. The members of the International Ice Hockey Federation are national ice hockey associations. To be a full member, member associations must be the controlling body of ice hockey in a sovereign state and must be recognised by the national sports confederation and/or National Olympic Committee of that sovereign state.

The governing body of the International Ice Hockey Federation includes the congress, the council, and the directorate. The congress is the highest authority of the International Ice Hockey Federation. The congress meets two times a year at the annual congress meeting and the semi-annual congress meeting. All member associations are allowed to participate with two delegates at every congress.

The congress has the power assigned to it in the statutes, which includes adopting and modifying official playing rules and the statutes and bylaws of the International Ice Hockey Federation. The congress also allocates sites for the International Ice Hockey Federation championships and elects members to the council for four-year periods⁶, including the president, senior vice-president, regional vice-presidents and council members (in that order). An open ballot is used for all votes unless a secret ballot is requested by any full member association.

Criteria in the voting system

There are two types of memberships in the International Ice Hockey Federation: Full members and associated members. All full members of the International Ice Hockey Federation have at least one vote at the congress. Full members can gain one extra vote if the following criterion is fulfilled:

⁶ Except for 2021, where the council is elected for a five-year period (2021-2026).

- The member association has taken part in three consecutive International Ice Hockey Federation tournaments (either senior men or women) including one tournament taking place at the same time as the annual congress.

When deciding on the allocation of the International Ice Hockey Federation World Championship, member associations whose national team is competing in the International Ice Hockey Federation World Championship (top division, men or women) are entitled to one additional vote (three votes in total). The third vote, however, only counts when voting for the site for the International Ice Hockey Federation World Championship and overall the system is considered a two-vote system.

According to the election document for the 2020-elections, the International Ice Hockey Federation has 53 member associations that are entitled to vote. Of these member associations only two – Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan – have one vote. The remaining 51 member associations have two votes.

International Ski Federation (FIS)

The International Ski Federation (FIS) was founded in 1924 and it is the sole and exclusive governing body for snow sport, including the following disciplines: Cross-country skiing, ski jumping, Nordic combined, alpine skiing, freestyle and freeski, snowboarding, speed skiing, telemark, grass skiing, and roller skiing⁷. The International Ski Federation is an association in accord with article 60ff of the Swiss Civil Code.

The governing body of the International Ski Federation includes the congress, the council and the executive committee. The congress is held every year for all the member associations and serves as the highest authority of the International Ski Federation. All member associations are entitled to participate in the congress with up to three delegates.

For many years the voting system at the congress was ‘one nation, one vote’, but that was changed in 1997 and today the International Ski Federation has a weighted voting system. The reason for the weighted voting system is according to Head of Services, Andreas Wenger, that:

“It is important to reflect that the National Ski Federations do not have the same influence on ski sport. Some countries have big investments and invest in their athletes or infrastructure and do a lot for the sport, by organising events on every level. On the other hand, we have countries (...) that are less relevant for the sport. This is reflected in the system, where the bigger nations have three votes, small nations have one vote.”

Interview with the International Ski Federation

⁷ Only one national organisation is eligible to become a member association of FIS and serve as the national governing body for FIS disciplines in the country. However, according to the FIS statutes it is possible to have separate national organisations responsible for the different FIS disciplines provided that the member association notifies FIS and that the member association is responsible for the actions of such organisation.

The weighted voting system is used at the congress, where member associations elect the president and the council for four and two years, respectively. The congress also has the power to amend and/or supplement the statutes of the International Ski Federation and to accept or exclude current disciplines. The voting process at the congress is secret only at the request of a delegate or a council member.

The congress does not decide the sites for World Ski Championships, which is instead decided by the council. The congress surrendered this right to the council following a corruption scandal with the selection of Sestriere as host site for the World Ski Championship in 1997. The World Ski Championship in Vail in 1999 was the last to be decided by the congress.

Criteria in the voting system

The International Ski Federation has two types of members: Associated members and full members. Associated members are not entitled to vote at the congress, but they can participate in the congress and in competitions. To become a full member a nation must have at least 500 registered members and at least three registered ski clubs. Full members earn one, two or three votes depending on their size and participation in world skiing.

The current voting system gives all full members at least one vote. However, member associations that have at least 10,000 individual members can earn an additional vote if they meet the following two criteria:

- They have competed in the last international ski championship (Nordic or alpine).
- They have hosted at least one international event (which is included in the FIS calendar) a year within the two last years.

If a member association has 50,000 individual members – and meet the abovementioned criteria – the member association earns two additional votes (in total three votes).

Member associations with two or three votes cannot split the votes but must exercise them uniformly. All votes by member associations must be exercised by a single delegate. Member associations that have not paid their annual membership fee lose their rights to vote at the congress.

The International Ski Federation has 135 member federations. In 2020, 74 member federations had paid their membership fees and were eligible to vote. Most member federations (42) had one vote, 14 members had two votes, and 18 members had three votes. According to the International Ski Federation's own judgment, no group is too big and that gives a good distribution of votes.

There are currently no plans to change the voting system. The criteria related to participation in and hosting of events is easy for the International Ski Federation to measure and works well. The number of members is important for national federations to become full members and to decide the number of votes. According to the International Ski Federation,

the number of members is the biggest challenge to the system. The International Ski Federation must rely on the data from the individual federations and is not able to check whether the numbers are valid. However, in practice, the problem is of minor concern because only a few member federations are at the cut points of 10,000 or 50,000 members.

Despite being of minor concern, the reason for the cut points (500, 10,000 and 50,000 members) is unclear. According to the International Ski Federation, 500 members is a relatively low threshold which makes it possible for most nations to become full members. The distinction between 10,000 and 50,000 members have existed in the International Ski Federation for many years and according to FIS, it is hard for some countries to reach 50,000 members.

International Tennis Federation (ITF)

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) was founded in 1913 by 15 inaugural member nations. The International Tennis Federation is legally a company unlike the other international sports federations in this research paper.

The International Tennis Federation is governed by the council, which is made up of delegates of the members assembled in the general meeting. The general meeting is held annually and considers various subjects including amendments to the rules of tennis and alterations to the principles of the constitutions and the regulations for international competitions. Every four years, the general meeting also elects the president of the International Tennis Federation and the board of directors.

There are three classes of members in the International Tennis Federation. Class A members are the trustees of the International Tennis Federation Trust. Class A members are entitled to attend and speak at general meetings but are not allowed to vote. Class B members are the national tennis associations. Class B members are entitled to attend, speak, and vote at general meetings. Class C members are tennis associations or corresponding organisations of countries or territories which, according to the council, are not sufficiently mature to be a Class B member. Class C members are entitled to attend and speak at general meetings but are not allowed to vote.

Criteria in the voting system

At the general meeting, voting power for class B members is decided by shares. Every Class B member has 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 or 12 Class B shares, which reflect the number of votes by the member association. Only one delegate per member association is allowed to vote on behalf of the association at the general meeting.

When a national member association is classified as a Class B member it receives one share (i.e., vote). After three years of membership, the association⁸ can apply for extra shares. Associations that have applied for and been given an increase in shares may not apply for a further increase in shares the following year.

⁸ The resolution to earn extra shares (or reduce the number of shares) and can also be submitted by the board of directors.

Further, at an annual general meeting, the council may consider a resolution submitted by a Class B member or the board of directors for an increase or reduction in shares. Any increase or reduction must be limited to the next share category (1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 12).

The council evaluates shares (increase or decrease) according to three criteria:

- *Participation Criterion:* Performance and participation in the Davis Cup and Billie Jean Cup, Junior Davis Cup and Junior Billie Jean Cup, World Junior Tennis and Wheelchair Team Cup. Performance in the ATP/WTA rankings, the International Tennis Federation World Tennis rankings, Junior World rankings and Wheelchair rankings.
- *Organisation Criterion:* Organisation of national and international tournaments
- *Development, Administration and Competitions Criterion:* Commitment and capability in tennis development (players, coaches and participation), administration (staffing, planning and facilities) and national competitions.

Information within the three criteria is used as a guide in an overall assessment by the council to increase or decrease share allocations.

Currently, there are 154 Class B Members. The distribution of votes among Class B members are: 90 members have 1 share/vote; 21 members have 3 shares/votes; 17 members have 5 shares/votes; 7 members have 7 shares/votes; 14 members have 9 shares/votes, and 5 members have 12 shares/votes.

Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI)

Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) is the world governing body for sports cycling and it oversees international competitive cycling events. Union Cycliste Internationale dates back to 1900 and was founded by the national associations from Belgium, France, Italy, Switzerland and the United States. The member associations of Union Cycliste Internationale are national member associations that represent the sport of cycling in their country. Union Cycliste Internationale is a non-governmental international association with a non-profit-making purpose.

Union Cycliste Internationale groups national member associations from the same continent together in continental confederations, which serve as administrative units and are integral parts of Union Cycliste Internationale. There are five continental confederations: Africa, America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania.

The congress is the general meeting of members, and it is the supreme body of Union Cycliste Internationale. The congress is held annually, and members exercise their voting rights through delegates democratically elected among each continental confederation. Each delegate must be a member of a national federation and is elected by the general assembly of the continental confederation concerned.

The delegates vote at the congress and elect the president of Union Cycliste Internationale and 11 other members of the management committee of Union Cycliste Internationale for a four-year period. Congress also has exclusive powers and duties to make amendments to the constitution and to admit, expel and suspend national federations.

The voting system of Union Cycliste Internationale stands out in comparison to other international sports federations in this paper as voting power is given to confederations and not member associations. According to Union Cycliste Internationale, the system has evolved in a stepwise process during the 20th century. Until 1939 there were only a handful of members of Union Cycliste Internationale and every member federation had a vote, whilst the six founding members had two votes. However, in 1939 Union Cycliste Internationale started to differentiate voting rights and voting power was decided by the sporting performance by the different nations in the World Cup (which at the time included the disciplines of road and track).

Later the system changed from nations to confederations and voting power was no longer decided by sporting performance. According to Union Cycliste Internationale, the change in the voting system reflects the change in how cycling competitions evolved in the second part of the 20th century from a competition between nations to a competition between teams (with athletes from different nationalities) and the fact that the Union Cycliste Internationale became a more complex organisation with the recognition of additional disciplines and the affiliation of nations which did not all compete in the same events. For these reasons, it no longer made sense to decide voting power on sporting performance by nations, and the evolution of the organisation most likely supported the switch from voting by nations to voting by confederations.

Criteria in the voting system

The voting power of the confederations is historically given and there are no criteria that determine their voting power (i.e., number of delegates per confederation, sporting performance, etc.).

The total number of votes is 45, and they are distributed among the voting delegates representing the continental confederations as follows: Africa – 9 delegates; America – 9 delegates; Asia – 9 delegates; Europe – 15 delegates; and Oceania – 3 delegates. Each delegate has one vote.

According to Union Cycliste Internationale, the current distribution of votes by confederations reflects the historical significance of Europe in the governance of Union Cycliste Internationale. However, in 2016, Union Cycliste Internationale had a board review of the constitution to ensure that elections for confederations were as democratic as possible. At the same time, minor changes were made in the number of delegates per confederation. Africa requested more delegates because its increase in membership which had become greater than for America and Asia. Its voting power was hence changed from 7 to 9 delegates. According to Union Cycliste Internationale, the change made sense, so Africa was given the

same number of delegates as America and Asia. At the same time, Europe also went from 14 to 15 delegates to maintain its proportion of total votes.

World Rowing (WR)

The World Rowing Federation, known as World Rowing (WR), sets the rules and regulations for the practice of the sport of rowing in all its forms including elite, para rowing, coastal, masters, and aspects of indoor rowing. World Rowing, previously named FISA (from the French, *Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d’Aviron*), was founded in 1892 by rowing representatives from France, Switzerland, Belgium, Adriatica, and Italy. World Rowing is a not-for-profit association and currently has 156 national member associations⁹.

World Rowing is governed by the congress, the council, and the executive committee. The congress is the supreme authority of World Rowing; it consists of delegates from national member associations (the council members also takes part in the congress, but have no voting rights). The congress elects the council and the executive committee for four-year terms and votes on proposals from member associations, the council, and the executive committee. The ordinary congress is held every year. Alterations to the statutes and the rules of racing can only be made by the congress every fourth year following the staging of the Olympic Games. The congress also attributes the World Rowing Championships among candidates which have been assessed by the Council.

The voting process at the congress is based on a weighted voting system. According to Governance Manager at World Rowing, Lucy Trochet, the weighted voting system is appropriate because the system makes it possible to “reflect active participation, contribution to and knowledge of the sport of rowing at an international level”.

World Rowing has a long history of using a weighted voting system dating back to 1923, when ‘one vote, three votes’ was implemented. This system was based on ordinary and extraordinary members. Member associations which organised a European championship were defined as ordinary members and were given three votes, while other members were defined as extraordinary members and were given one vote. Subsequently, the system has evolved including adjustments made in 1993, 2001 and 2017. The criteria used in the current system are explained below.

Criteria in the voting system

The current voting system is still based on the ‘one vote, three vote’-principle. All member associations are entitled to one vote and can earn two additional votes if the member association fulfils the following criteria:

- *Three-year Membership Criterion:* The member association has been a member of World Rowing for at least three years. The criterion is used to allow members to

⁹ World Rowing uses the term member federations but for uniformity purposes they are named member associations in this study.

develop a certain knowledge of competitive rowing at a national and international level.

- *Participation in Regattas Criterion:* The member association has competed at certain regattas¹⁰ with a total of at least 12 crews during the previous four-year Olympic period. The criterion is used to encourage active participation.
- *Gender Participation at Regattas Criterion:* For all crews that competed in the regattas (excluding mixed crews), at least 25 per cent of the crews must be female and 25 per cent male. The criterion is used to encourage balanced gender representation across member associations and World Rowing and to acknowledge the efforts of those member associations which make progress on more balanced gender representation.

The voting rights (one or three votes) apply for a period of four years following the Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games. Currently, there are 156 World Rowing member associations; these are full members entitled to vote. For the 2021-2024 period, 99 member associations have one vote and 57 member associations have three votes.

According to World Rowing, there are no plans to change the voting system, but World Rowing is constantly considering improvement opportunities to the governance of the organisation.

World Taekwondo (WT)

World Taekwondo (WT) was founded in 1973 and is the international sports federation governing the sport of taekwondo. World Taekwondo is organised as an international non-governmental, not-for-profit association and today has 211 members.

World Taekwondo is governed by the general assembly, the council and the management. The general assembly is the general meeting of the council and the representatives of national member associations. The general assembly is held every year as World Taekwondo's supreme decision-making organ.

Originally, World Taekwondo used the 'one nation, one vote'-system at the general assembly, but this was changed in 2005 when a weighted voting system was introduced. According to World Taekwondo, the weighted voting system was implemented to:

"Ensure that only active members can influence the important decision-making process of the organisation and to ensure there will be no attempts to buy votes from inactive members."

Interview with World Taekwondo

Adjustments to the weighted system have been undertaken in 2010 and 2019.

¹⁰ List of regattas: World Rowing Championships, World Rowing Under 23 Championship, World Rowing Junior Championship, Olympic or Paralympic qualification regattas and Continental Games regattas recognised by World Rowing.

According to the constitution, eligible council members and member associations are entitled to vote at the general assembly. The general assembly elects the president of World Taekwondo for a four-year period and most of the members of the council. The general assembly also has the power to change the statutes of World Taekwondo as well as the competition rules of taekwondo. Voting is conducted by secret ballot in principle.

Criteria in the voting system

There are two levels of membership of World Taekwondo. Level 1 members receive one vote at the general assembly, while level 2 members do not receive a vote at the general assembly. Council members are also allowed to vote at the general assembly. The levels of voting are defined as follows:

- *Level 1 membership:* Member associations that have participated with at least two competitors in World Taekwondo tournaments (not Grand Prix) and participated with at least one delegate at a general assembly within the last two years. Level 1 members have one vote at the general assembly.
- *Level 2 membership:* Member associations that do not fulfil the criteria for level 1 membership within the last two years. Level 2 members are only allowed to send one delegate to the general assembly and are not entitled to vote.
- *Eligible council members:* Council members (except auditors) have one vote at the general assembly¹¹.

According to World Taekwondo, the two-level memberships give power to the member federations that participate actively in competitions and decision-making meetings (general assembly) (i.e., level 1 members). All important information is – according to World Taekwondo – obtained through active participation and therefore it does not make sense to give power to members who do not have that information (i.e., level 2 members).

At the last general assembly in 2021, World Taekwondo had 210 national member associations. 130 member associations are classified as level 1 members with one vote, while 80 member associations are classified as level 2 members with zero votes. At the last elections at World Taekwondo, there were 158 eligible votes¹² - 130 votes for member associations, and 28 votes for council members.

According to World Taekwondo, there are currently no plans to change the existing system, but the system has its challenges. The main challenge according to World Taekwondo is that smaller member associations with fewer resources are not able to participate in competitions and attend the general assembly. Despite support from World Taekwondo, these small member associations tend to become more inactive due to the system.

¹¹ See article 6 of World Taekwondo bylaws for eligible council members.

¹² http://www.worldtaekwondo.org/att_file_up/election/Result%20of%20WT%20Election%202021.pdf

Discussion

In this section, we discuss three themes concerning the weighted voting systems. First, we discuss the weighted voting system and the different criteria used by the federations. Then we discuss the reason for having a weighted voting system according to the federations. Finally, we discuss the distribution of votes in the systems.

Voting systems and criteria

The international sports federations under scrutiny in this research project have different voting systems. Table 1 below summarises the voting systems and the criteria used across the seven international sports federations. The table is elaborated in the discussion below.

Union Cycliste Internationale stands out among the seven federations because delegates representing the five confederations (not member associations) vote at the congress. Delegates are chosen by the member associations within each of the confederations, with each member association having the same number of votes. The number of delegates varies across confederations and the confederations, therefore, have different voting power at the congress (although delegates within each confederation do not necessarily vote uniformly). However, each delegate within the confederations only has one vote, and the system does not fully qualify as a weighted voting system. In addition, there are no objective criteria determining the distribution of votes for confederations.

The remaining six federations all have weighted voting systems and give different voting power to member associations. However, the composition of the systems varies, as discussed below.

It applies to all six systems that voting can only be done by member associations who fulfil the requirements for being a full member. In all federations besides World Taekwondo, full members are given at least one vote. At World Taekwondo only full members who have had at least two participants in World Taekwondo tournaments and have had a least one delegate at the general assembly within the last two years, are entitled to vote (they earn two votes). At World Taekwondo, council members are also entitled to vote.

The six voting systems can be classified into three groups based on how they are composed.

The first group of voting systems uses a simple system where the fulfilment of individual criteria grants an extra vote. The Badminton World Federation fits within this group. All full members of The Badminton World Federation are given a vote at the annual general meeting, and extra votes can be earned by fulfilling any of four criteria. Every criterion fulfilled by a member association gives an extra vote and does not depend on the fulfilment of any other criteria. The voting system at the International Ice Hockey Federation also fits this group. All full members at the International Ice Hockey Federation are given at least one vote, and full members can earn an extra vote if they fulfil the participation criterion.

The second group of voting systems uses a system where multiple criteria must be combined to get extra votes. Three federations fit within this group. The first federation within this group is World Taekwondo. World Taekwondo fits the group because full members are only given a vote if they also fulfil the participation criterion (having at least two participants in World Taekwondo tournaments) and have had a least one delegate at the general assembly within the last two years. The second federation within this group is World Rowing. All full members of World Rowing are given at least one vote and can earn two additional votes if they fulfil the following three criteria: a) they have been a member of World Rowing for three years, b) they have taken part in World Rowing regattas, and c) they have 25 per cent gender representation for crews at regattas. The third federation within this group is the International Ski Federation. All full members of the International Ski Federation are given one vote, and extra votes can be earned if two sets of criteria are fulfilled: a) member associations must have competed in the last Ski Championship and b) member associations must have hosted at least one international event included in the International Ski Federation calendar. If member associations fulfil these two criteria, they can earn one extra vote if they have more than 10,000 registered members in their national association or two extra votes if they have more than 50,000 registered members in their national association.

The third group uses a system based on an overall assessment of a range of criteria. This system is used by the International Tennis Federation. The assessment is done within five criteria, but there are no objective measures to decide whether the individual criteria have been met. The number of votes – or shares – given to member associations are 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, or 12 based on an assessment undertaken by the council at the annual general meeting. There are rules that determine how member associations are to apply for an increase (or decrease) in shares and how often member associations can apply for an evaluation of their shares.

Table 1 summarises the composition of the voting systems and number of votes.

Table 1: Review of criteria in voting systems

Federation	Composition of voting system.	Number of votes
Badminton World Federation	All members have one vote. One extra vote for every criterion fulfilled.	1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 votes
International Ice Hockey Federation	One vote for being a member. One extra vote for members fulfilling the participation criterion	1 or 2 votes (3 votes when deciding site for World Championship)
International Ski Federation	One vote for being a member. Members fulfilling participation and hosting criteria get two or three votes depending on grassroots members.	1, 2, or 3 votes
International Tennis Federation	All full members are given at least one vote. The number of votes is decided by an assessment within four criteria	1, 3, 5, 7, 9, or 12 votes
Union Cycliste Internationale	Have a system based on confederations, not national member associations.	Voting by confederations
World Rowing	One vote for being a member. Three votes for fulfilling all criteria.	1 or 3 votes
World Taekwondo	No vote for being a member. One extra vote can be earned if criteria are fulfilled. Council members are given one vote	0 or 1 vote

Criteria in the voting systems

As with the composition of the voting systems, the criteria used in the systems can be divided into three overall categories: 1) Membership, 2) international involvement, and 3) national development.

The first category is membership of the international sports federation. All federations have different types of members (i.e., full member, associated member, or affiliated member) and not all types of members are entitled to vote (which requirements must be met to become a full member varies across federations). With the exemption of World Taekwondo, full members of the federations are given at least one vote. The reason for World Taekwondo to not give all full members a vote is that only member associations who participate actively in taekwondo should be able to influence political decisions.

An interesting aspect of the membership criterion concerns the length of the membership. To be considered eligible for extra votes, member associations of World Rowing must have been members for at least three years (other criteria must also be fulfilled to earn extra votes). According to Governance Manager at World Rowing, Lucy Trochet, the length of membership-criterion is used to “allow time for members to develop a knowledge of rowing at a national and international level” before being given extra votes.

The second category is international involvement, which is the basis of existence for the international sports federations and thus an important criterion.

One criterion regarding international involvement concerns participation in international tournaments. Six federations use a participation criterion in their voting system (Union Cycliste Internationale does not have any criteria). At an overall level, the reason for including the criterion in the voting systems is to encourage international involvement in the sport through participation in international tournaments, but what classifies an international tournament and how much participation is needed to fulfil the criterion varies.

A second criterion regarding international involvement concerns the hosting of international tournaments. This criterion is used by the Badminton World Federation, the International Ski Federation and the International Tennis Federation, and the general reason for including this criterion is to reward those member associations who contribute to the foundation for the sport at an international level.

A third criterion regarding international involvement concerns performance at the international level. This is used by the Badminton World Federation and the International Tennis Federation. At the Badminton World Federation, an extra vote is given to member associations who have at least one player in the World top-40, while performance at the ATP/WTA and the International Tennis Federation ranking is used in the assessment by the International Tennis Federation.

A fourth criterion regarding international involvement concerns gender representation. This criterion is only used by World Rowing. The crews at regattas must be represented by at least 25 per cent men and 25 per cent women, and the criterion is used to encourage member associations to have representation of both genders in competitions.

A fifth and final criterion is participation in the annual general meeting (or similar). This criterion is only used by World Taekwondo.

The third and final category is national development, which is included by some federations to differentiate member associations based on how developed the sport is in their country.

The first criterion within national development concerns the number of registered members in the national association. The Badminton World Federation gives an extra vote to member associations that have at least 10,000 members, while the International Ski Federation distinguishes between 10,000 and 50,000 registered members. In combination with other criteria, this can give member associations one or two extra votes, respectively. At a general level, the reason for including the number of registered members in a national association as a criterion is to be able to reflect the size of the sport in the nation in the member associations' voting power. For instance, the Badminton World Federation argues that it is reasonable to distinguish between member associations where badminton is considered the

national sport of the country and is played by millions of people and member associations where badminton is a less developed sport and only played by few.

The second criterion regarding national development concerns administration and competitions at a national level. This criterion is only included in the International Tennis Federation's system in the assessment of votes by the council at the annual general meeting. According to the statutes of the International Tennis Federation, the criterion is rather broad and include factors concerning commitment and development of players, coaches, and participation as well as administrative factors concerning staffing, planning, and facilities at the national level.

Table 2 summarises the criteria used by the federations in their voting system. Union Cycliste Internationale is not included in the table because there are no criteria.

Table 2: Review of criteria in voting systems

Category	Criterion	Badminton World Federation	International Ice Hockey Federation	International Ski Federation	International Tennis Federation	World Rowing	World Taekwondo
Membership	Membership	Full members vote	Full members vote	Full members vote	Full members vote	Full members vote, three year membership necessary for extra vote	Only level 1 members and council members vote
International involvement	Participation in international tournaments	Participation in six out of ten events	Has taken part in three consecutive IIHF tournaments and has a national team who has participated in the World Championship	Has competed in the latest Ski Championship	Participation in ITF tournaments	Participation at regattas	Participated with at least two competitors in WT-tournaments
	Hosting of events	Hosting international tournaments, at least three in four years		Hosted at least one international event in the FIS calendar	Organising national and international tournaments		
	Sporting performance at the international level	One player in top-40			Performance at ATP/WTA and ITF rankings		
	Gender representation					For crews at regattas, at least 25 per cent men/women	
National involvement	Participation in general assembly (or similar)						Participated with at least one delegate at a general assembly within the last two years
	Grassroot participation	10,000 registered players		10,000/50,000 registered members			
	Development				Administration and competitions		

Reasons for having a weighted voting system

This section focuses on the reasoning behind the voting systems at the international sports federations. This has been a focus area in the interviews with the representatives from the federations. It was not possible to perform interviews with the International Ice Hockey Federation and the International Tennis Federation and these federations are therefore not included in this part of the research paper. The reasons are grouped into two categories: 1) Historical explanations for the voting system, and 2) advantages of the voting system.

Historical explanations for voting systems

‘One nation, one vote’ is the most common voting system in international sports federations. Many international sports federations were founded by only a few nations at the beginning of the 20th century. At that time, ‘one nation, one vote’ was seen as a fair system securing equal voting power among the relatively few members. In many international sports federations ‘one nation, one vote’ has been maintained as more and more national member associations has been admitted into the federations.

Today, the ‘one nation, one vote’-system is hard to change because it involves changing the constitution of the international sports federations, which in most cases can only be done with a qualified majority. This is difficult because the nature of a weighted voting system is to take voting power from some member associations and transfer it to others. Consequently, some member associations would have to voluntarily give away their voting powers, fully or partially.

Therefore, it has been a focus of this study to survey how the international sports federations included in this paper created support for a weighted voting system. It has, however, been difficult to uncover the processes leading to a weighted voting system, because the reasons for the current voting systems date back many years. In this project, it has only been possible to illustrate four examples.

A first example is the Badminton World Federation. The weighted voting system at the Badminton World Federation dates back to the early years of the federation. The Badminton World Federation was founded in 1934 by a relatively small number of member associations and from the start, every member was given equal voting power. However, as more member associations joined, a two-tier system emerged and it is an integral part of the governance structure at the Badminton World Federation to have members associations with different voting power. As the number of member associations and their differences grew (e.g. the number of players at the national level, participation in international competitions), it was – according to the Badminton World Federation – natural to reflect these differences in the distribution of votes.

A second example is World Rowing. World Rowing also has a long history of a weighted voting system dating back to 1923, when a ‘one vote, three vote’-system was implemented. Member associations organising European Championships were given three votes, while other member associations were given one. The system has been adjusted since then.

A third example is Union Cycliste Internationale. Like the Badminton World Federation and World Rowing, Union Cycliste Internationale also draws on history to explain its weighted voting system. But as argued above, the voting system at Union Cycliste Internationale is different from the voting system at the other federations because it distributes voting power based on confederations instead of member associations. According to Union Cycliste Internationale, this is related to the change in cycling competitions and a change from nations competing against each other to teams competing against each other. Unlike the other federations, there are no objective criteria determining voting power and according to Union Cycliste Internationale, this system reflects the historical significance of Europe.

A fourth and final example is World Taekwondo. World Taekwondo is the only federation among the seven federations included in this paper, who recently have changed its voting system from 'one nation, one vote' to a weighted voting system. This was done in 2005 with minor adjustments in 2010 and 2019. According to World Taekwondo, the voting system was changed because some members only showed up at the elections. This is against the nature of World Taekwondo, as it wants to promote the sport of taekwondo and make more people engaged in sporting activities rather than political activities.

In summary, the representatives from the Badminton World Federation, World Rowing and Union Cycliste Internationale argue that their current voting systems reflect a natural development within the federation/sport. At the Badminton World Federation, the weighted voting system emerged with increasing differences between the member associations, while the current system at Union Cycliste Internationale reflects a change from nations to teams competing against each other. At World Taekwondo, which is the only federation with a recent change of voting system, the change was made to get member associations engaged in sporting activities rather than political activities.

Advantages of having a weighted voting system

The international sports federations point to two overall reasons for having a weighted voting system. The first reason concerns the involvement in the sport, while the second is related to good governance in international sports federations.

Involvement in the sport

All the federations argue that the possibility to reflect individual member associations' involvement in the sport in the political influence is the biggest advantage of having a weighted voting system. The Badminton World Federation serves as an illustrative case of why the level of involvement is important to reflect in voting power:

"A 'One Nation, One Vote' system can be seen as unfair, where MAs with millions of players and huge investment in the international badminton system have the same influence on the overall badminton development as a developing MA with only a few hundred players and with very limited involvement/contribution to the international badminton system."

Interview with Badminton World Federation

The Badminton World Federation further stresses that generally there are more smaller member associations and a 'one nation, one vote'-system could lead to a very low level of influence/representation by the member associations that are most active, involved and contribute to the system. A 'one nation, one vote'-system would in the case of the Badminton World Federation place the voting majority in the hands of the less developed member associations and a central argument for the weighted voting system at the Badminton World Federation is to balance the voting power in favour of the more developed member associations.

There are also other arguments of why federations have weighted voting systems. At World Rowing, an argument for using involvement in sport as a criterion is – according to governance manager Lucy Trochet – also related to the question of who should decide the future of the sport:

“All important information is obtained through participation and therefore it makes sense that we give more authority to those members which have knowledge and participate internationally.”

Interview with World Rowing

In the case of World Rowing, the weighted voting system is also a way to ensure that the member associations which participate internationally and with experience in rowing have the greater influence on decisions regarding the future of international rowing. A similar argument is used at World Taekwondo, and in both World Rowing and World Taekwondo, an advantage of the weighted voting system is that decisions about the sport taken at the congress are more informed.

World Taekwondo also distinguishes between member associations' contribution, but unlike World Rowing and the Badminton World Federation, only member association who takes part in competitions and the general assembly can vote. World Taekwondo frequently experienced that some member associations showed up at elections to take part in the political process but did not take part in competitions. Solely taking part in political decision-making is, according to World Taekwondo, against the idea of international sports federations. Therefore, World Taekwondo implemented a voting system where only active member associations (i.e., who participate in competitions) can vote and decide the future of taekwondo. Council members are also able to vote at the general assembly.

The criterion regarding involvement in the sport can also be about the status of the sport at the national level. This argument is applied by the International Ski Federation and is related to the different possibilities to perform ski sport across the world. In some countries, ski sport is the biggest sport and there are many possibilities throughout the year to perform ski sport. In other countries, ski sport is a minor sport that can only be performed abroad. According to the International Ski Federation, these differences among national member associations intensify the need for a weighted voting system. Similar arguments are used by Badminton World Federation and World Rowing.

Good governance in international sports federations

The second advantage of having a weighted voting system concerns the governance in international sports federations. World Taekwondo is one of the federations that argue that their weighted voting system is important in relation to good governance in international sports federations:

“We have often found in international sport that politics ruin the organisation. Politics are always deeply related to elections. If the accountability is clearly given to members (ed., who are actively participating in the sport), there will be no attempt to buy votes or influence the organisation without actually having been engaged in the organisation and/or the sport itself.”

Interview with World Taekwondo

By giving votes to member associations who participate actively in taekwondo, the risk of corruption and vote-buying is diminished according to World Taekwondo. Whether this argument is also used concerning council members has not been addressed by World Taekwondo.

World Rowing also stresses the advantage of better governance. They argue that “within any voting system there is the risk of vote-buying and corruption, but arguably there is a greater risk in a ‘one nation, one vote’-system”.

The Badminton World Federation also points to good governance as an advantage of the weighted voting system. The benefits are related to the four-year assessment period where votes are fixed. The four-year assessment period ensures that:

“Voting powers cannot be manipulated by ‘artificially’ increasing the activity level for one year to gain more votes, e.g. by member associations trying to get more votes during election years. The voting power system can therefore not very easily be used as a short term political tool.”

Interview with Badminton World Federation

The four-year assessment period gives the system stability and the Badminton World Federation also stresses that the system is verifiable and transparent.

The International Ski Federation also points to governance as a primary reason for using a weighted voting system. However, the federation do not mention corruption and vote-buying, but argue that the voting system must be seen in connection with the organisational system at the International Ski Federation. The International Ski Federation uses roughly the same system for the distribution of finances across member associations as for the distribution of votes. This amplifies the incentives for national member associations to act in accordance with the wishes of the International Ski Federation.

As mentioned earlier, there are no defined criteria for distributing votes at Union Cycliste Internationale, and Union Cycliste Internationale explains the current distribution as given by history. Union Cycliste Internationale does, however, stress the importance of

democracy. According to Union Cycliste Internationale, it is important that the system is as democratic as possible, and hence the system was adjusted in 2016 as previously explained.

As stated above, there are multiple reasons for having a weighted voting system. The reasons are related to the involvement in the particular sport and the promotion of better governance in international sports federations.

Distribution of votes

In this section, we focus on the numeric side of the voting systems by analysing the distribution of votes. The distribution of votes, the number of votes, and the distance between them varies considerably between the systems and is important because this ultimately influences the voting power of the individual member associations.

Two conditions for the analysis are initially important to emphasise. First, focus is on the differences in voting power among member associations classified as 'full members'. Associated members or affiliated members, who are not meeting the demands to become full members, are not included. Secondly, not all seven international sports federations have publicly accessible reports on the distribution of votes, and in some cases, the distribution of votes is retrieved from the general election.

Table 3 below summarises the distribution of votes among the international sports federations. Union Cycliste Internationale is not included in the table because the system is not based on member associations but confederations.

The table shows the number of different votes included in each voting system, the number of member associations with a given number of votes (e.g. 132 members of the Badminton World Federation have one vote), and the unique percentage each member association (based on their number of votes) holds of the total votes (i.e., each member association of the Badminton World Federation with one vote holds 0.3 per cent of the total votes in the federation).

Table 3: Overview of the distribution of votes in voting systems

Federation	Number of votes	Full members	Unique percentage of votes per member association
Badminton World Federation ⁱ	1	132	0.3
	2	16	0.6
	3	13	0.9
	4	7	1.2
	5	19	1.5
International Ice Hockey Federation ⁱⁱ	1	2	1
	2	51	1.9
International Ski Federation ⁱⁱⁱ	1	42	0.8
	2	14	1.6
	3	18	2.4
International Tennis Federation ⁱⁱⁱⁱ	1	90	0.2
	3	21	0.6
	5	17	1.1
	7	7	1.5
	9	14	1.9
	12	5	2.5
World Rowing ⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱ	1	99	0.4
	3	57	1.1
World Taekwondo ⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱ	0	80	0
	1 (member associations)	130	0.6
	1 (council members)	28	0.6

i: According to Voting Strength for 2021-2024, 187 member associations are allowed to vote¹³. Badminton World Federation has 10 associated members who are not allowed to vote.

ii: According to the election document package for the 2020 election, 53 member associations were allowed to vote¹⁴. The international Ice Hockey Federation has 22 associated members and 1 affiliated member who were not allowed to vote.

iii: At the 2020 International Ski Federation congress, 74 members were allowed to vote¹⁵. Members must pay a membership fee to vote. The International Ski Federation has 60 associated members who are not allowed to vote.

iiii: According to the constitution of the International Tennis Federation, there are 154 Class B members with voting rights. There are 56 Class C members, who are not allowed to vote¹⁶.

iiiii: According to World Rowing voting entitlements, 156 members are entitled to vote for the period 2021-2024¹⁷.

iiiii: According to the last elections at World Taekwondo in 2021, there are 158 eligible votes: 130 member associations with one vote, 28 council members with one vote.

¹³ <https://extranet.bwfbadminton.com/docs/document-system/81/82/961/BWF%20Voting%20Strength%20-%201%20Oct%202020%20-%2030%20Sept%202024%20-%20VF%2012092021.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://iihfstorage.blob.core.windows.net/iihf-media/iihfmvc/media/downloads/regulations/2020/iihf-2020-election-document-package.pdf>

¹⁵ Source: https://assets.fis-ski.com/image/upload/v1636980013/fis-prod/assets/FIS_Congress_2020_CongressMinutesFinalised.pdf

¹⁶ <https://www.itftennis.com/media/2431/the-constitution-of-the-itf-2021-english.pdf>

¹⁷ https://d2wmdlq830ho5j.cloudfront.net/worldrowing/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/06175258/World-Rowing-Voting-Entitlements-for-2021-to-2024-based-on-participation-2017-2021-at-06102021_F.pdf

A range of different information is available in the table. The lowest number of different votes is found in World Rowing, World Taekwondo, and the International Ice Hockey Federation, who all operate with two votes (1+3, 0+1, and 1+2, respectively). The distance between the votes is slightly different in each system. The distance is smallest in the International Ice Hockey Federation and World Taekwondo followed by World Rowing. World Taekwondo is a special case because council members are also able to vote at the general assembly. The International Ski Federation has one more type of vote (three) than World Rowing, World Taekwondo and the International Ice Hockey Federation, but the same distance as World Rowing from lowest to highest.

The highest number of votes is found in the Badminton World Federation and the International Tennis Federation. The Badminton World Federation operates with five different votes and a distance of four (from one to five), between the lowest and the highest vote, while the International Tennis Federation has six different votes and a distance of 11 between lowest and highest vote (from 1 to 12).

It is possible to identify each member association's share of the total number of votes at the federations across every vote. Not surprising, the highest unique share of the votes for a member association is at the International Tennis Federation, where the five member associations with 12 votes have 2.5 per cent of all votes each at the International Tennis Federation. However, the member associations with the highest number of votes at the International Ski Federation have almost as high a share of the total number of votes in the federation (2.4 per cent) as was the case in the International Tennis Federation. This reflects the relatively low number of member associations reaching two or three votes within the International Ski Federation system.

The differences explained above can be summarised by showing the percentage of the total number of votes in a federation a member association with a given vote have. This is shown in figure 1 for the six federations with a weighted voting system.

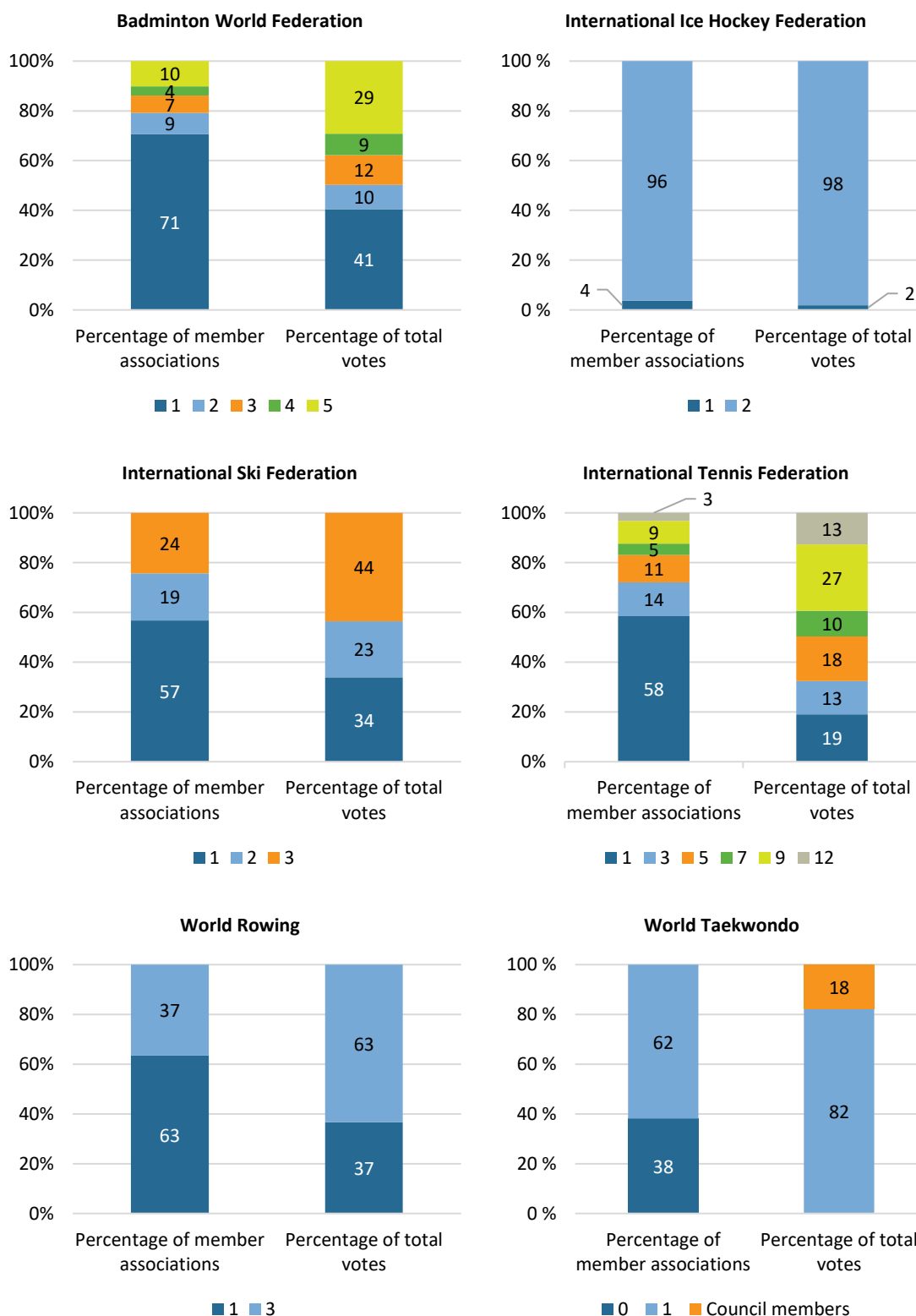
Using the Badminton World Federation as an example, the graph for Badminton World Federation shows that 71 per cent of the member associations of the World Badminton Federation have one vote, which constitutes 41 per cent of the total votes at the Badminton World Federation. On the other hand, 10 per cent of the member associations at the World Badminton Federation have five votes, which constitute 29 per cent of the total votes at the World Badminton Federation.

In four federations – the Badminton World Federation, the International Tennis Federation, the International Ski Federation, and World Rowing – the majority of member associations have one vote and they outnumber the member associations with more votes. However, in all four federations, the weighted voting system changes the balance of the system in favour of the member associations with more votes and in none of the four federations do the member associations with one vote take up more than 50 per cent of the votes.

The weighted voting system also has a significant influence on the voting balance at World Taekwondo. Almost four in ten member associations (38 per cent) hold zero votes and are not able to influence political decision making. Instead, the 28 council members at World Taekwondo are given one vote and they together hold 18 per cent of the votes at World Taekwondo.

Finally, the weighted voting system at the International Ice Hockey Federation has very little impact on the balance of power. Except for two member associations, all member associations are given two votes and the voting system does not make any significant change to the power balance.

Figure 1: The distribution of member associations and votes across federations



Another way to look at the distribution of votes is to compare with what it would have been if the federations had used a 'one nation, one vote'-system. This is done in figure 2

below, which shows the voting power for each member association holding a given vote compared to the voting power in 'one nation, one vote'.

Using the Badminton World Federation as an example, the graph in the top left corner shows that if the Badminton World Federation was using the 'one nation, one vote'-system each member association would hold 0.5 per cent of the total votes in the federation. However, each member association's individual voting power is changed with the weighted voting system. Each member association with one vote holds 0.3 per cent of the total votes in the weighted voting system, while each member association with five votes holds 1.5 per cent of all votes in the Badminton World Federation. The voting power of the member associations with five votes is 2.9 times as higher than with a 'one nation, one vote'-system.

The six federations can be categorised into three groups based on the influence the weighted voting systems has on individual member associations' voting power compared to a 'one nation, one vote'-system: Little/no effect, moderate effect, and high effect.

The International Ice Hockey Federation fits in the group with little/no effect. The voting power of the member associations with the highest number of votes is 1.02 times higher compared to a situation where the 'one nation, one vote'-system was used. With the current distribution of votes, the voting system at the International Ice Hockey Federation is in practice a 'one nation, one vote' system.

Three federations – World Rowing, the International Ski Federation, and World Taekwondo – are in the group with a moderate effect. The weighted voting system has some effect on voting power at World Rowing and the International Ski Federation and the member associations with the most votes are assigned 1.7 and 1.8 times as much voting power, respectively, compared to a situation where the 'one nation, one vote'-system was applied. World Taekwondo is a special case because council members are given votes. The voting system has little impact on the member associations with one vote (they are given 0.6 per cent of the total votes, compared to 0.5 per cent in a 'one nation, one vote'-system). However, the member associations with zero votes are given zero per cent of the voting power in the weighted voting system – in a 'one nation, one vote'-system they would each have received 0.5 per cent of the total votes.

Finally, two federations – the Badminton World Federation and the International Tennis Federation – are classified in the group with high effect. In these federations, the member associations with the highest number of votes are given considerably higher voting influence than in a 'one nation, one vote'-system. The voting power for member associations with the highest number of votes in the International Tennis Federation is 3.9 times as high compared to what it would have been in a 'one nation, one vote'-system, while it is 2.9 times higher in the Badminton World Federation.

In summary, the analysis shows that the weighted voting systems have different influences on the voting power compared to a 'one nation, one vote'-system. The weighted voting system at the International Ice Hockey Federation does not have an effect in practice, while the

systems at International Tennis Federation and Badminton World Federation have a high effect on voting power.

Figure 2: Individual voting power for member associations in a weighted voting system compared to 'one nation, one vote'



Litterature

Geeraert, A. (2015). *Sports Governance Observer. The legitimacy crisis in international sports governance*. Copenhagen. Retrieved from http://www.playthegame.org/media/3968653/SGO_report_web.pdf

Mittag, J., & Putzmann, N. (2013). Reassessing the Democracy Debate in Sport. Alternatives to the One - Association - One - Vote - Principle? In *Action for Good Governance in International Sports Organisations* (pp. 83-97). Copenhagen: Play the Game/The Danish Institute for Sports Studies.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Invitation to participation in research project

Dear Madam/Sir

As you may know, Play the Game has focused on good governance in international sports federations for many years.

Currently, we are undertaking a research project focusing on the 'One Nation, One Vote' principle. The One Nation, One Vote principle is the most common voting principle in international sports federations, but the principle has its challenges and pitfalls. Therefore, we find it relevant to focus on alternative voting systems and their benefits for international sports federations. The intent of the research project is to focus on the advantages and possible challenges of alternative voting systems.

The research project is based on a review of alternative voting systems in different international sports federations. The XX Federation is among the seven federations we have identified as an interesting model for further analysis.

In order to perform a thorough investigation of the different systems, we invite all federations to share their experiences in an individual interview. Through this conversation, we intend to get a deeper understanding of why federations have an alternative system in place, and what the benefits from having a different voting system are. We are also interested in the criteria used, and how the system is evaluated by the individual federations.

We would like to invite one representative from XX Federation to take part in an interview. The interview will be performed online and last for approximately 30-45 minutes. We would like to use quotes from the interview in the final research report. All quotes will be sent to the representative for acceptance prior to publication of the final research report.

Your cooperation and willingness to take part in the interview would be highly appreciated, as your input will help contribute to shedding light on the benefits of alternatives to One Nation, One Vote. We look forward to your response – please contact the Project Manager, Peter Forsberg, via email or phone.

If you have comments or questions regarding the research project, you are welcome to contact Project Manager, Peter Forsberg, or International Director, Jens Sejer Andersen.

Sincerely

Peter Forsberg

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Appendix 2: Interview questions

Research project on alternative voting systems

Criteria used to determine voting power

- What criteria are used in the system to determine voting power?
- Why are these criteria used? Please explain the reason for each individual criteria.
- What are the advantages and the challenges with each individual criteria?
- Are there other criteria that you would like to include?

Reasons for and structure of voting system

- Why do you have an alternative voting system other than the 'One Nation, One Vote'?
- What are the advantages of your voting system? What are the challenges?
- What aspects of your current voting system would you like to improve? Are there any plans to do major or minor changes to the system?

Adaption of voting system

- When was the current voting system adapted?
- Why was the system adapted? What made it feasible to implement the system at that time? Was there a certain event or crises that caused you to adapt to your current voting system?
- Have you experienced any unforeseen advantages or challenges when implementing your current voting system?

Recommendations for other federations

- Would you recommend other federations to use alternative voting systems?
- Why/why not?



Play the Game