

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a netball court. In the foreground, a large red arrow-shaped logo with the text "I TRUST SPORT" in white is painted on the wooden floor. In the background, there are tiered seating areas, a netball hoop, and various banners for the "NETBALL WORLD CUP Sydney 2013".

# An independent review of the INTERNATIONAL NETBALL FEDERATION

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Commissioned by the International Netball Federation

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## 1 Executive summary

The [International Netball Federation](#) (INF) commissioned sports governance consultancy I Trust Sport in September 2017 to conduct an independent governance review in order to seek an external perspective on the standard of the INF's governance. The review was also intended to set a benchmark against which the INF could measure future improvements, and to propose recommendations for further governance work.

A [questionnaire](#) published by the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations ([ASOIF](#)) was used for the study.

The study and recommendations are the work of I Trust Sport. There has been no attempt by individuals within the INF or beyond to influence the review in an inappropriate way.

### 1.1 Governance assessment process

The analysis suggests that the INF achieves solid and consistent governance standards across all the areas of assessment. The INF scored fractionally above the median for summer Olympic international federations, who were assessed on the same basis. This is a good performance considering the modest financial resources available. Nevertheless, there are a number of potential areas for improvement.

Among the positive points are:

- The INF has a published strategic plan (Netball 2020) with specific goals and performance indicators
- The INF publishes audited financial accounts and a wide range of other information
- The INF has accounting controls and a risk management process in place
- The INF has a defined conflicts of interest policy, which is implemented
- The INF has education programmes and assistance for coaches, umpires and athletes, including online resources
- The INF has an open and transparent process for the assessment of bids for major events
- The INF dedicates significant attention to social responsibility ("empowerment of women and girls"), which gives netball a unique positioning
- The INF has a strong set of policies to guard against discrimination of all kinds
- The INF has rules in place to establish an independent panel for investigating disciplinary cases, with the power to implement sanctions

Aspects of governance with room for improvement include:

- Limited information is openly published about the congress
- There is limited activity in relation to environmental sustainability (although other aspects of sustainability are considered, particularly the human factor and economic issues)
- Activity to educate players and officials about match manipulation has only started recently (however, the INF has assessed the risks of match manipulation, which are believed to be relatively low)
- There is a minor restriction in the nominations process for elections – candidates must be nominated and seconded
- Term limits are in place for elected officials but there is an exemption for "exceptional circumstances"



## **1.2 Summary recommendations**

The INF would benefit from working further on its electoral rules and processes. Considering that there will be an electoral congress in 2019, it is important for the INF to be “election ready”. One example of action to take would be the development of specific rules on campaigning. There are other measures which would need congress approval, such as removing the exemption to the term limits for directors in the case of “exceptional circumstances”.

While the INF already publishes a wide range of information, there is scope to improve, for example by removing the password-protection for congress documents. As a policy, the assumption should be that information will be published unless there is a reason not to do so.

Another point to consider is broadening the INF’s action in relation to sustainability so that it includes greater attention to environmental issues.

It is acknowledged that it would be very challenging to attempt to implement all of the recommendations at once and it may be necessary to prioritise. Full details can be found in paragraph 9 below.

## **1.3 Electoral system recommendations**

- A.1) Develop campaigning rules for election candidates
- A.2) Develop detailed election procedural rules
- A.3) Publish voting numbers after elections
- A.4) Remove exemption to term limits allowed for “exceptional circumstances”
- A.5) Consider adding an independent, non-executive director to the board

## **1.4 Transparency recommendations**

- B.1) Publish congress documents without password protection
- B.2) Publish official INF decisions in a designated website section
- B.3) As a policy, presume that information should be published unless there is a reason not to do so
- B.4) Provide a worked example of a calculation for world rankings

## **1.5 Other recommendations**

- C.1) Develop a sustainability policy which includes environmental sustainability
- C.2) Develop a rolling INF policy review programme

## 2 Context of the review

The Independent Netball Federation (INF) commissioned sports governance consultancy I Trust Sport to conduct an independent review of the sport in September 2017.

The objectives of the independent review were:

- To assess the standard of the INF's governance, including by use of the [questionnaire](#) developed by the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF)
- To set a benchmark against which the INF can measure future improvements
- To make recommendations for further governance work

## 3 About I Trust Sport

[I Trust Sport](#) is a sports governance consultancy established in London in 2013 which is dedicated to improving the governance of international sport through collaboration. Assessing governance of international federations is a particular area of expertise. I Trust Sport has had no previous dealings with the INF.

## 4 Approach

I Trust Sport used the questionnaire published by ASOIF as the basis of the assessment because it is up-to-date and relatively objective.

The governance assessment process also enables a degree of comparison with the group of 28 summer Olympic international federations which were reviewed in January to March 2017.

## 5 Governance assessment of the INF using ASOIF tool

### 5.1 About the questionnaire

There are 50 indicators equally divided among five sections:

- Transparency
- Integrity
- Democracy
- Sports development and solidarity
- Control mechanisms

## 6 Sources of information

Information was gathered from the INF website and in particular from these documents:

- [INF Memorandum \(August 2013\) and Articles of Association \(July 2017\)](#)
- [INF Annual Report and Accounts 2016](#)
- [INF Code of Ethics \(2013\)](#)
- [INF Anti-Corruption Code \(2013\)](#)
- [INF Code of Conduct \(2014\)](#)
- [INF Equality and Diversity Policy \(2014\)](#)
- [INF Whistle Blower Policy \(2014\)](#)
- [INF Disciplinary and Dispute Resolution Regulations \(2014\)](#)
- [INF General Regulations \(2017\)](#)
- [INF Congress 2017 documents](#) (password protected)
- E-mail newsletters

After an initial analysis of documents, the evidence for the scores was reviewed with INF chief executive Clare Briegal and Angela Sanderson, INF accountant. Subsequently, ten of the indicator scores were reviewed separately by Marva Bernard, formerly an INF board member and president of the Jamaica Netball Association.

The analysis took place between 13 September and 16 October 2017.

### 6.1 Method of assessment

In order to assess governance using the ASOIF tool, I Trust Sport has awarded a score of 0-4 for each of the 50 indicators based on analysis of INF documents and expert opinions.

Score definitions for each indicator in the questionnaire can be summarised as follows:

- 0 - not fulfilled at all
- 1 - partially fulfilled
- 2 - fulfilled
- 3 - well-fulfilled according to published rules/procedures
- 4 - totally fulfilled in a state of the art way

A score of 2 for a particular indicator therefore represents a good or at least adequate score. It is expected that a score of 4 will be difficult to achieve and rare.

I Trust Sport has made the final decision on all scores and has not been pressurised in any way to increase or decrease scores.

### 6.2 Allowing a margin of error

The scoring system gave the analysis a degree of objectivity. However, in many cases there was room for debate. In the ASOIF study it was determined that each total score should be understood to have a margin of error from -7 to +7.

For more details of the scoring process and the policies applied, see **Error! Reference source not found.** on pages 25-27 in the [ASOIF First Review of IF Governance](#) (or follow [this link](#) instead).

## 7 Placing the INF in context

The International Netball Federation Limited is a company limited by guarantee which has its legal base in the Isle of Man. It is a membership organisation with over 70 national netball federations as members and is the sole, internationally-recognised governing body for the sport. There is a board of nine directors, of whom four are elected by the INF congress and five by the regional (continental) federations. The INF controls INF Secretariat Limited, a private company limited by shares registered in England and Wales. The secretariat, consisting of several professional staff led by the chief executive, is based in Manchester.

The analysis of INF governance suggests that the INF achieves solid and consistent governance standards across almost all areas which were studied. The total score is measured at 105 out of a theoretical maximum of 200 (with the margin of error from -7 to +7), fractionally above the median for summer Olympic international federations, who were assessed on the same basis. The results are good but there are a number of potential areas for improvement.

As the revenue of the INF is significantly lower than that of most international federations with sports on the Olympic programme, the number of professional staff and other resources available are restricted (in fact, there were even fewer professional staff until recently). The assessment takes into account the fact that governance requirements should be proportionate to the size of the INF. Some of the aspects of governance which received lower scores have therefore not been prioritised in preparing the recommendations.

## 8 Analysis of scores

The total scores in the five sections of the questionnaire, each comprising ten indicators, were as follows:

Questionnaire section	Total score (out of a theoretical maximum of 40)
Transparency	27
Integrity	15
Democracy	17
Sports Development and Solidarity	23
Control Mechanisms	23

### 8.1 High and low scores by section

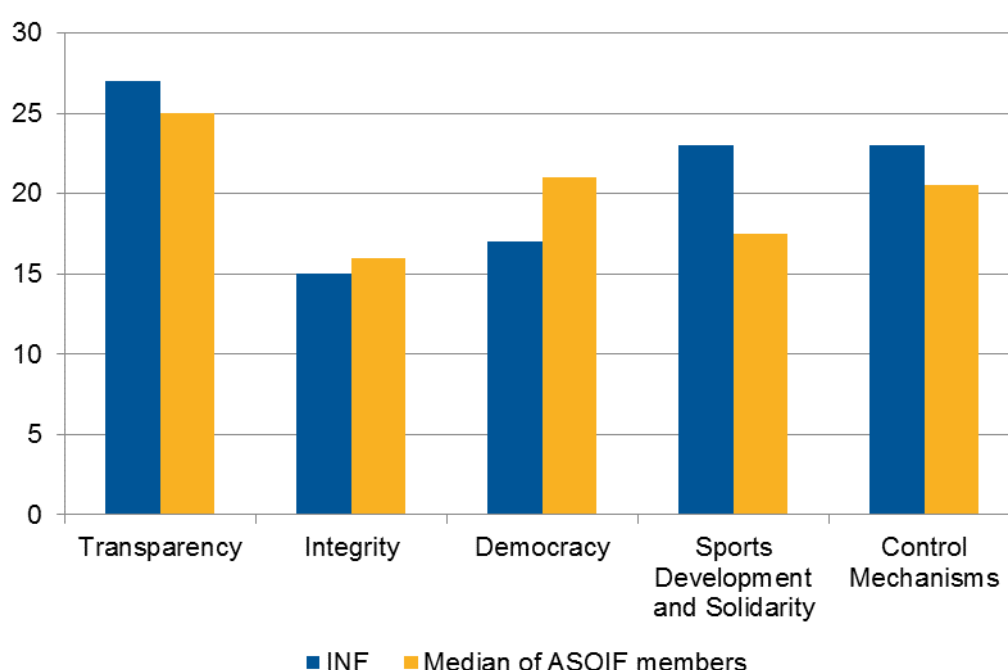
Section	Lowest score	Highest score	Total (out of theoretical maximum of 40)
Transparency	1	4	27
Integrity	0	3	15
Democracy	1	3	17
Sports Development and Solidarity	1	4	23
Control Mechanisms	1	3	23

There were 14 scores of 0 or 1 among the 50 indicators and 16 scores of 3 or 4, demonstrating a fairly even spread.

The grouping of indicators specified in the ASOIF questionnaire is partially thematic and partially pragmatic. It would be reading too much into the analysis to conclude from these scores that the INF is “better” at one category than another. It is also important to consider what amounts to a proportionate response by the INF. For more on this point see 8.5 below.

## 8.2 Comparison with average scores from ASOIF analysis of 28 summer Olympic sports

Scores by section (out of theoretical maximum of 40)



Section	INF	Median score of ASOIF members	Difference
Transparency	27	25	+2
Integrity	15	16	-1
Democracy	17	21	-4
Sports Development and Solidarity	23	17.5	+5.5
Control Mechanisms	23	20.5	+2.5
Total	105	99.5	+5.5

Source: [First Review of IF Governance](#) (ASOIF, April 2017)

Note that due to the constructed nature of the scoring system, it is not valid to calculate percentages.



Overall, the INF achieves slightly above the median score among the 28 summer Olympic international federations. Considering the margin of error from -7 to +7 (see 6.2 above), the extent of any gap is not clear. The general pattern of scoring is similar to other international federations with the highest score for the Transparency section and the lowest for Integrity.

The INF performs best in relative terms in the Sports Development and Solidarity section, scoring well in a range of indicators relating to developing the sport (for example, there is a Regional Development Manager for Africa despite there only being a small number of employed staff). It should be acknowledged that the INF's support is relative to its resources – in absolute terms the INF's ability to provide development funding directly is severely constrained.

The INF score is a little lower than the median in the Democracy section. Specific points resulting in lower scores include the non-publication of voting numbers for elections, a lack of specific rules on campaigning, and an exemption to term limits in the event of "exceptional circumstances". There is no indication that any of these issues is individually harmful to the successful functioning of the INF but there are recommendations for change set out in 9 below.

### 8.3 High scores (4 out of 4)

The high scores are listed in the order of the indicators in the questionnaire, not in order of priority. The questionnaire section is referenced in brackets after each point.

- The INF published the Netball 2020 strategic plan, which sets out the vision, mission, values, goals and KPIs (Transparency)
- The INF publishes biographies of board members, including the date of election (Transparency)
- The INF published the 2016 audited annual accounts and the accounts of the subsidiary INF Secretariat are also available (Transparency)
- The INF has a strong focus on the role of the sport for social responsibility ("empowering through netball") (Development and Solidarity)
- The INF's commitment to tackling discrimination and promoting equality comes through consistently in policies, rules and other published information (Development and Solidarity)

### 8.4 Other good scores (3 out of 4)

- The INF publishes its Articles and Memorandum of Association, which are easy to find on the website (Transparency)
- The INF publishes details of the organisation structure and how it operates (Transparency)
- The INF has policies designed to ensure that its member federations comply with ethical codes and principles (Integrity)
- The INF has a defined conflicts of interest policy, which is implemented (Democracy)
- The INF has a redistribution strategy for its regional federations with some details published (Development and Solidarity)
- The INF has education programmes and assistance for coaches, umpires and athletes, including online resources (Development and Solidarity)

- The INF has rules in place to establish an independent panel for investigating disciplinary cases, which can implement sanctions (Control Mechanisms)
- The INF has accounting controls and a risk management process in place (Control Mechanisms)
- The INF conducts due diligence as part of the assessment of bids for major events (Control Mechanisms)
- The INF has an open and transparent process for the allocation of major events (Control Mechanisms)

### **8.5 Low scores (0 out of 4)**

The assessment takes into account the fact that governance requirements should be proportionate to the size and capacity of the INF. Some of the aspects of governance which receive low scores listed below have therefore not been regarded as top priorities in preparing the recommendations.

- The INF has not co-operated on integrity matters with public authorities such as Interpol, Council of Europe or the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, although it is likely that there has been no occasion to do so (Integrity)
- The INF has not published decisions by disciplinary bodies but there have been very few cases in recent years (Integrity)

### **8.6 Other aspects of governance with room for improvement (1 out of 4)**

- The INF congress documents are mostly password-protected on the website (Transparency)
- The INF acknowledges sustainable development in official documents but the focus of activity is mostly limited to health, wellbeing and economic sustainability (Integrity / Development and Solidarity)
- The INF conducts some limited educational activity on anti-doping and the risks of match manipulation (Integrity)
- The INF provided information about elected roles to be filled at the 2017 congress in a password-protected section on the website (Democracy)
- There is a minor restriction on the nomination of candidates for election as the nomination has to be “seconded” by another federation (Democracy)
- The INF has a limit of three terms of four years for directors but with an exemption for “exceptional circumstances” (Democracy)
- The INF congress meets only every two years (Democracy), although the board meets several times each year
- The INF provides only limited support for legacy activity in communities which host events (Development and Solidarity)
- The INF has co-operated only on an occasional basis with relevant public authorities such as UN bodies on social responsibility issues (Development and Solidarity)
- The INF has only limited policies in place to prevent commercial interests from overriding sporting regulations (Control Mechanisms)
- The INF rarely conducts open tenders for procurement contracts, although the number of significant contracts is small (Control Mechanisms)

The scores for each indicator and the evidence justifying the scores are available on request from the INF.

## 9 Full recommendations

### 9.1 Introduction to recommendations

The recommendations are grouped by theme in 9.5 below. In each case the proposal derives directly from the governance assessment with the ASOIF tool or from insight provided by the INF.

It is acknowledged that it would be very challenging to attempt to implement all of the measures at once. There are also budget implications, both direct and indirect. One possible next step would be to prioritise and set a timetable for their implementation, taking account of the respective roles and powers of the secretariat, the board and the congress.

The important role of organisational culture in the achievement of objectives is now receiving increasing attention in the business world<sup>1</sup> and beyond. Well-designed structures and processes can only aid organisational effectiveness if accompanied by a positive, collaborative attitude among the stakeholders in the sport. While these recommendations may help to improve aspects of the INF's governance, the future success of netball depends mostly on the collective efforts of the people who dedicate themselves to the sport, of whom the vast majority do so as volunteers.

The recommendations are the work of I Trust Sport. There has been no attempt by individuals within the INF or beyond to exert pressure regarding the inclusion or exclusion of any particular topic.

### 9.2 Electoral rules and democracy – getting “election ready”

The INF scored slightly lower than the median for Olympic sports in the Democracy section. There is no indication that any of the specific details of the democratic system is individually harmful to the successful functioning of the INF but there is scope to go further. Considering that there will be an electoral congress in 2019, it is important for the INF to be “election ready”. One example of action to take would be the development of specific rules on campaigning.

### 9.3 Pushing transparency further

The INF already publishes a wide range of information and scored relatively well in the Transparency section. Nevertheless, there is room to improve, for example by removing the password-protection for congress documents and by adopting as policy the assumption that information will be published unless there is a reason not to do so.

The national team [world rankings](#) are published and kept up-to-date on the website. There are also a set of frequently asked questions. One potentially helpful additional step would be to provide a worked example of how the rankings are calculated.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example <https://www.fca.org.uk/news/speeches/culture-financial-institutions-everywhere-nowhere> (accessed on 17/10/17)

## 9.4 Assorted other points

One of the pillars of the INF's Netball 2020 strategic plan is "empowering through netball", referring to the potential of the sport to contribute to human aspects of sustainable development. There is also a Sustainability and Development working group, whose terms of reference include a fundraising strategy. By contrast, there is limited activity in relation to environmental sustainability. Few national member federations or other organisations in netball own or manage venues but there is still potential for the INF to be more active in this area. For example, manufacturers, suppliers and sponsors associated with the sport have a role to play in setting high standards in their respective sectors.

Other indicators in the questionnaire with a score of 0 or 1 would merit attention, although they may not all be high priority issues for the INF.

## 9.5 Table of recommendations

No	Theme / Recommendation	Detail	ASOIF questionnaire reference
<b>A</b>	<b>Electoral system</b>		
<b>A.1</b>	Develop campaigning rules for election candidates	Develop campaigning rules for election candidates including, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General conduct</li> <li>- Promotion in media</li> <li>- Use of promotional materials</li> <li>- Gifts and hospitality</li> <li>- Travel and attendance at meetings and events</li> <li>- Ensuring equal treatment of candidates</li> </ul>	4.2
<b>A.2</b>	Develop detailed election procedural rules	Develop and publish detailed election procedural rules covering a range of scenarios	4.3
<b>A.3</b>	Publish voting numbers after elections	Publish a full breakdown of votes for all candidates after elections	4.1
<b>A.4</b>	Remove exemption to term limits allowed for "exceptional circumstances"	Amend Articles so that the term limits apply without exception	4.6
<b>A.5</b>	Consider adding an independent, non-executive director to the board	Consider adding a further member of the board, who would be an independent, non-executive director selected through open recruitment. This could be a way to fill any perceived skills gap and it might also increase diversity of thought on the board.	4.7

<b>B</b>	<b>Transparency</b>		
<b>B.1</b>	Publish congress documents without password protection	Publish key Congress documents openly without password protection, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Invitation</li> <li>- Agenda</li> <li>- Minutes</li> <li>- Background documents</li> <li>- Positions open for election/appointment</li> </ul> (It is acknowledged that there may be occasional topics or documents relevant to Congress which are not suitable for publication)	2.9 & 4.4
<b>B.2</b>	Publish official INF decisions in a designated website section	Publish official decisions taken by the congress, board and other committees systematically in a designated section on the website; on occasion these decisions may merit a news item as well	2.10
<b>B.3</b>	As a policy, presume that information should be published unless there is a reason not to do so	As a general principle, the assumption should be that information will be published unless there is a reason not to; this is not intended as a criticism as the INF is already transparent in many important areas; however, there is room to go further, for example in making an explicit reference that there have not been disciplinary cases in the previous 12 months etc.	3.10 and elsewhere
<b>B.4</b>	Provide a worked example of calculation for world rankings	Publish a worked example showing how the world rankings are calculated to provide reassurance about how the system works	2.10
	<b>Other recommendations</b>		
<b>C.1</b>	Develop a sustainability policy which includes environmental sustainability	Develop a sustainability policy which includes environmental sustainability as one of its themes; this might be a task for the Sustainability and Development Working Group	3.6 & 5.4
<b>C.2</b>	Develop a rolling INF policy review programme	Put in place a rolling review programme to ensure that INF policies and processes are reviewed at least every four years	3.3, 6.6



## 10 Acknowledgements

Netball is an exciting and popular sport with a unique positioning which has a great deal to offer individuals and societies. I am pleased to be able to offer a point of view on how the INF can continue to develop in a positive way in the best interests of netball. In conducting this review, I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn from dedicated and knowledgeable people. I would like to thank those who have generously offered their time and support. INF chief executive Clare Briegal has been very responsive and helpful throughout the process. Angela Sanderson, the INF accountant, provided numerous useful details. Former INF board member and president of the Jamaica Netball Association Marva Bernard kindly reviewed some of the analysis as well as offering valuable insight. The INF provided the photo for the cover. Any errors which remain are those of the author alone.

## 11 Further information

A background document including all scores and references is available from the INF on request.

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