

1 **Challenges and opportunities arising from self-regulated**  
2 **professionalisation processes: an analysis of a Swiss national sport**  
3 **federation**

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17 **Challenges and opportunities arising from self-regulated**  
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20

21 In recent decades, some governments (e.g. Canada, the UK, Australia) have imposed far-  
22 reaching professionalisation processes on national sport federations (NSFs), while others (e.g.  
23 Switzerland) have made only minor impositions and relied more on NSFs to self-regulate. As  
24 governments must decide on the extent to which sport policy imposes professionalisation  
25 processes on NSFs, understanding the challenges and opportunities arising from both policy-  
26 imposed and self-regulated professionalisation processes is relevant. However, extant literature  
27 has focused mostly on professionalisation processes imposed by sport policy. Therefore, this  
28 study aims to analyse the context, action, content and outcome of self-regulated  
29 professionalisation processes to identify the challenges and opportunities arising from these  
30 processes. A framework of professionalisation and a corresponding processual approach build  
31 the conceptual background of this study. A single-case study is applied to enable a holistic and  
32 long-term analysis of the proceedings of a Swiss NSF's professionalisation processes. The  
33 results reveal the mechanisms of self-regulated professionalisation processes (i.e. how contexts  
34 and actions shape outcome), thus leading to a conceptualisation of these mechanisms and  
35 conclusions about challenges and opportunities arising from self-regulated professionalisation  
36 processes, which are useful for sport managers and policy makers.

37

38 **Keywords:** sport policy; self-regulation; imposition; processual analysis; case study

## 39 **Introduction**

40 National sport federations (NSFs) and their associated sport clubs play a central role in the  
41 provision of organised sports, particularly in Europe, and thus help attain the strategic  
42 objectives of the national sport policy (e.g. health promotion, social cohesion, talent  
43 development; Hoekman *et al.* 2015, Bayle 2017). NSFs promote sports in society, organise  
44 competitions and grassroots events, manage marketing and sponsorship activities at the  
45 national level and support the sport clubs with appropriate services (Ferkins and Shilbury  
46 2010, Hoye and Doherty 2011, Nagel *et al.* 2015). For all these duties, many NSFs are facing  
47 growing expectations from both member organisations and external stakeholders (e.g.  
48 government, umbrella federation, sponsors, media). For example, member organisations  
49 expect their NSF to ensure coach development (Ferkins and Shilbury 2010), while sponsors  
50 expect media exposure and modern forms of communication (Ruoranen *et al.* 2018).  
51 However, NSFs' mainly volunteer-based organisational structures are experiencing  
52 increasing difficulties in satisfying these diverse expectations, and thus many NSFs are  
53 working to professionalise their structures, processes and staff (e.g. employment of paid staff,  
54 development of a strategy, adaptation of organisational structure; Shilbury and Ferkins 2011,  
55 Dowling *et al.* 2014, Ruoranen *et al.* 2016).

56 In the past few decades, certain governments, such as Canada, the UK and Australia,  
57 have met the growing expectations for NSFs by imposing far-reaching professionalisation  
58 processes as a condition of the government funds the NSFs receive (Amis *et al.* 2004a, Green  
59 and Houlihan 2006, Grix 2009). Canadian NSFs, for example, were required to develop a  
60 wide range of written policies and procedures, employ paid and specialised staff and shift the  
61 decision-making authority from volunteers to professional staff (Amis *et al.* 2004a). Other  
62 governments, such as Switzerland, have made only minor impositions in terms of  
63 professionalisation, such as the existence of a strategy (Lang *et al.* 2018), and relied more on

64 NSFs to self-regulate. These examples indicate that governments are concerned with the  
65 question of the extent to which sport policy imposes professionalisation processes on NSFs  
66 by setting, for example, standards and requirements as a condition of government funds. The  
67 empirical assessment of both the imposed and non-imposed professionalisation processes,  
68 and the challenges and opportunities associated with these processes, may generate  
69 knowledge to assist sport policy makers to gauge the extent to which sport policy imposes  
70 professionalisation processes on NSFs. According to Fahlén *et al.* (2015), non-imposed  
71 processes are called ‘self-regulated’ processes because, from a sport political perspective,  
72 these processes are self-regulated at the NSF level. Self-regulated processes are defined by  
73 the autonomy of an NSF in deciding whether or not it implements the respective process,  
74 regardless of internal (e.g. from members or staff) and/or external (e.g. from sponsors)  
75 pressure, which in most cases exists (see Fahlén *et al.* 2015). In turn, imposed processes  
76 mean that the NSF does not have any other option but to follow the demands of external  
77 stakeholders (e.g. government, international federation, sponsor) because the measures are  
78 either part of legislation (e.g. O’Brien and Slack 2004) or a condition of receiving financial  
79 subsidies, which the NSF cannot reject (e.g. Amis *et al.* 2004a).

80       The few existing studies analysing NSFs’ professionalisation processes holistically over  
81 the years (e.g. Amis *et al.* 2004a, O’Brien and Slack 2004), have focused on processes  
82 imposed by sport policy (e.g. the ‘Best Ever Programme’ in Canada, the ‘Paris Declaration’  
83 in rugby; see also Strittmatter *et al.* 2018). These studies reveal a significant increase in the  
84 professionalisation of many affected NSFs. However, other NSFs have struggled with the  
85 impositions, either because they lacked financial and human resources for the implementation  
86 or because they found that the imposed measures were not appropriate for their organisation.  
87 Sport Canada’s (i.e. the government’s agent) impositions, for example, only had the goal of  
88 improving performance at the Olympic Games, which was not appropriate for all

89 organisations (Amis *et al.* 2004a). As existing studies have not analysed the proceedings of  
90 self-regulated professionalisation processes, the challenges and opportunities arising from  
91 these processes remain unclear. Therefore, this study focuses on analysing self-regulated  
92 professionalisation processes.

93         The Swiss national sport policy builds on the principles of subsidiarity and autonomy,  
94 which means that it makes only minor impositions on the professionalisation of NSFs (e.g.  
95 existence of a strategy) and grants considerable latitude in how the NSFs can invest the  
96 government funds they receive. Therefore, most professionalisation processes conducted by  
97 Swiss NSFs are self-regulated at the NSF level, which makes this setting appropriate for the  
98 aim of this study. Building on Nagel *et al.*'s (2015) framework of causes, forms and  
99 consequences of professionalisation and Pettigrew's (1997) processual approach, this study  
100 reconstructs the context, action, content and outcome of self-regulated professionalisation  
101 processes in a Swiss NSF to understand and conceptualise the mechanisms of these processes  
102 (i.e. how contexts and actions shape the outcome of the processes) and, thus, to unpack the  
103 challenges and opportunities arising from these processes. We applied a single-case analysis  
104 to enable a holistic and long-term analysis of professionalisation processes.

105

### 106 **Contextual background: Swiss sport policy**

107 Switzerland's sport legislation was first introduced in 1972 and established the basis for the  
108 government's following sport promotion activities. In 1999, the Federal Office for Sport  
109 (FOSPO) was set up to develop Switzerland's sport policy. The resulting concept followed  
110 five strategic aims: health, education, performance, economy and sustainability. As part of  
111 the performance aim, the FOSPO mandated Swiss Olympic, the umbrella federation of the 86  
112 NSFs and national Olympic committee, to distribute government funds to the NSFs. Using  
113 the principles of subsidiarity and autonomy, the FOSPO formulates goals linked to the

114 government funds, but Swiss Olympic can make autonomous decisions on how to distribute  
115 the funds and which achievements to demand from NSFs as a condition of the funds (Swiss  
116 Federal Council 2000, Chappelet 2010, Bayle 2017).

117         Nowadays, Swiss Olympic imposes the existence of statutes, a mission statement,  
118 financial planning and member statistics on NSFs to become a member of Swiss Olympic. To  
119 receive the basic government funds, the amount of which is determined by the number of  
120 members, Swiss Olympic requires NSFs to provide (1) a strategy, including the NSF's  
121 position towards grassroots and high-performance sport and measures for promotion of  
122 volunteers; (2) ethics planning, including a multi-annual planning of measures; and (3) an  
123 annual report, including the budget and financial statement. Since 2011, Switzerland's sport  
124 legislation has included extra funding for competitive sport. To receive this extra funding,  
125 Swiss Olympic imposes the definition of a high-performance sport promotion concept,  
126 including a strategy, objectives, a responsible person for high-performance sport and a  
127 detailed budget for high-performance sport, on NSFs. The amount of extra funding an NSF  
128 receives for competitive sport is based on a five-tier classification. The classification builds  
129 on the NSF's success in high-performance sport (i.e. success of elite athletes in international  
130 competitions, their potential success in the next Olympic cycle, success of young athletes in  
131 international competitions and quality of high-performance sport promotion concept  
132 implementation) and the relevance of the sport (i.e. international reputation, economic  
133 relevance and national popularity for active participants and spectators). Additional funds are  
134 provided for qualifying for the Olympic Games and organising mega events (Swiss Olympic  
135 2018). With this funding system, Swiss Olympic exerts only minor influence on the NSFs'  
136 professionalisation compared with other sport systems (e.g. Canada, Australia) by demanding  
137 a few concrete measures as a condition of the funds. However, except for these conditions,  
138 the NSFs can autonomously decide how to invest the funds (Bayle 2017).

139

140 **Theoretical background and literature review**141 *Framework of causes, forms and consequences of professionalisation*

142 Building on the conceptualisations of Bayle and Robinson (2007) and Legay (2001) and  
143 summarising extant sport management and sociological literature, Nagel *et al.* (2015)  
144 developed a conceptual framework for the analysis of NSF's professionalisation (Figure 1).  
145 The framework suggests that a professionalisation process originates from specific causes,  
146 which can arise at the federation, the external environment and the internal environment  
147 levels. Such causes can lead to a change in professionalisation forms, from which specific  
148 consequences at the federation, the internal environment and the external environment levels  
149 can arise.

150

151 [Figure 1 about here]

152

153 Nagel *et al.*'s (2015) literature review showed that much is known about potential  
154 causes (e.g. Ruoranen et al. 2018), forms (e.g. Amis et al. 2004b) and consequences of  
155 professionalisation (e.g. Bayle and Robinson 2007). However, to identify the challenges and  
156 opportunities arising from self-regulated professionalisation processes, examination of the  
157 proceedings of such professionalisation processes is required. As Nagel *et al.*'s (2015)  
158 framework does not account for the process perspective, we added Pettigrew's (1997)  
159 processual approach to include a focus on actions during the processes (i.e. how processes  
160 were conducted). The combination of Nagel *et al.*'s and Pettigrew's frameworks provides the  
161 frame to guide the empirical analysis of professionalisation processes in this study. The  
162 empirical analysis contributes by specifying and conceptualising the mechanisms of

163 professionalisation processes and unpacking the challenges and opportunities arising from  
164 self-regulated professionalisation processes.

165

### 166 *Processual approach*

167 Pettigrew's (1987, 1997, 2012) processual approach suggests a multi-level, holistic analysis  
168 of change over a period of at least 12 years to avoid a focus on narrow changes. The four  
169 levels of Pettigrew's approach are context, process, content and outcome. Context considers  
170 factors that cause the change process at the federation (i.e. inner context) and environment  
171 (i.e. outer context) levels, similar to causes in Nagel *et al.*'s (2015) framework. Process refers  
172 to actions of the concerned actors during the process (e.g. decisions, behaviour, measures)  
173 that contribute to develop the content of the process. Content conforms with  
174 professionalisation forms in Nagel *et al.*'s framework. While Nagel *et al.* do not consider  
175 actions in their framework, Pettigrew (2012) postulates that a long-term interplay between  
176 context and action shapes content and outcome. Thus, outcome is the intermediate and final  
177 effect of context and action (i.e. consequences in Nagel *et al.*'s framework). In the following,  
178 we label the process level as 'action', because the word 'process' often defines the whole  
179 process, including context and outcome. According to Pettigrew (1987), the 'why' of change  
180 stems from the context, the 'how' from the actions and the 'what' from the content. For  
181 example, an NSF's board might realise that the NSF's organisational structure is no longer  
182 appropriate (i.e. context) and decides to discuss options to adapt the structure, engages an  
183 external consultant to support the discussion and promotes the process by setting deadlines  
184 and persistently controlling how the work proceeds (i.e. action). Finally, the NSF might adapt  
185 its organisational structure (i.e. content), resulting in board satisfaction (i.e. outcome).

186

### 187 *Studies on professionalisation processes*



188 After Kikulis *et al.* (1992) identified the well-known organisational design archetypes,  
189 follow-up studies examined changes in Canadian NSFs' organisational designs, which were  
190 imposed by sport policy (e.g. Slack and Hinings 1992, 1994, Kikulis *et al.* 1995, Amis *et al.*  
191 2004b). The so-called Best Ever Programme pressured Canadian NSFs to become 'a  
192 professional bureaucracy controlled by professional staff, with volunteers reduced to a  
193 supporting role' (Amis *et al.* 2004b, p. 20). These studies identified a shift to more  
194 bureaucratic and professionalised organisations. Parent *et al.* (2018) recently analysed the  
195 same NSFs and revealed a convergence in governance structures and the need to revisit  
196 Kikulis *et al.*'s (1992) design archetypes. However, these studies focused on what changed  
197 and, to a certain extent, why the changes occurred (e.g. Slack and Hinings 1992, 1994), but  
198 not how the changes were undertaken (i.e. actions during the processes).

199       Only a few studies have analysed the professionalisation process of NSFs holistically  
200 over multiple years, examining processes driven by sport political changes and impositions.  
201 Amis *et al.* (2004a) examined change processes in Canadian NSFs during the Best Ever  
202 Programme and found that not all the processes were successfully completed. The successful  
203 ones were characterised by leaders who created a vision and persuaded other members, as  
204 well as voluntary board members who were willing to share power with paid staff. The  
205 unsuccessful ones were characterised by ineffective transformational leadership, volunteer  
206 board members with centralised power, subunits (e.g. volunteers) with deviating interests and  
207 a lack of financial and human resources. NSFs also complained that the financial support  
208 provided by Sport Canada was not adequate for the imposed changes, and that Sport Canada  
209 viewed success at the Olympic Games as the only criterion of achievement, a criterion that  
210 was not relevant for many sports. Skinner *et al.* (1999) and O'Brien and Slack (2003, 2004)  
211 found that the Paris Declaration, which allowed the financial remuneration of rugby players,  
212 led to the professionalisation of Queensland and English Rugby Union. With this adapted

213 regulation, new business-oriented actors entered the field and brought professionally oriented  
214 values with them, took measures to advocate their interests and created a collective vision;  
215 however, these professionalisation processes were hindered by a lack of financial resources  
216 and leadership. Girginov and Sandanski (2008) analysed change in Bulgarian NSFs over  
217 multiple decades, when the country was undergoing fundamental political, economic and  
218 social transformations. These transformations led to a restructuring of the sport sector,  
219 including a redistribution of capital, which caused change processes in the NSFs. All these  
220 studies found relevant contexts and actions for imposed professionalisation processes but  
221 neither differentiated between context and action nor analysed inter-relationships and  
222 reconstructed the mechanisms of these processes.

223         A few action research studies have analysed self-regulated professionalisation  
224 processes. However, these processes were guided by the researchers of the studies. These  
225 studies focused on the analysis of specific professionalisation forms, which involved either  
226 the professionalisation of strategic capability (Ferkins *et al.* 2009, Ferkins *et al.* 2010) or  
227 governance capability (Shilbury and Ferkins 2015). Evaluating an intervention period of 18  
228 months, these studies revealed the importance of shared leadership, board involvement in  
229 strategy and collective board leadership in governance decision making. Fahrner (2009)  
230 analysed an NSF's self-regulated changes in organisational structures with a focus on  
231 decision-making processes and found that the different opinions of members, key individuals  
232 with particular influence on decisions, intransparent preparation of decisions from top down  
233 and a lack of communication before and after decisions were problematic for decision-  
234 making processes. While these studies provide first results about specific self-regulated  
235 professionalisation processes, they do not explain the inter-relationships among multiple  
236 concurrent or consecutive professionalisation processes (i.e. longitudinal course of the  
237 processes). For this aim, a more holistic and long-term process analysis is required.

238 According to this review, many previous studies have analysed why professionalisation  
239 processes were undertaken (i.e. context), but only a few studies have also considered how the  
240 processes were conducted (i.e. actions taken during the process). Furthermore, the studies  
241 focused mainly on professionalisation processes imposed by sport policy. Although imposed  
242 professionalisation processes may be accompanied by self-regulated processes, previous  
243 research has not distinguished between imposed and self-regulated professionalisation  
244 processes. Furthermore, previous research has not differentiated among context, action,  
245 content and outcome of professionalisation processes or analysed inter-relationships. Thus, it  
246 remains unclear which contexts and actions are relevant to conduct self-regulated  
247 professionalisation processes and how they shape outcome (i.e. mechanisms of the  
248 processes). To address this research gap, we formulated two research questions: Which  
249 contexts and actions are relevant to the NSF's professionalisation processes? (RQ1) and How  
250 do contexts and actions shape the outcome of the professionalisation processes (i.e. inter-  
251 relationships; RQ2)? The analysis of contexts reveals whether the processes are imposed or  
252 self-regulated. Additional analysis of the relevant contexts and actions, and how these  
253 contexts and actions shape outcome, unpacks the mechanisms of self-regulated  
254 professionalisation processes and enables identifying the challenges and opportunities arising  
255 from these processes.

256

## 257 **Method**

### 258 *Design*

259 Drawing on the conceptual background of Nagel *et al.* (2015) and Pettigrew (1987, 1997,  
260 2012), this study analyses the four levels of context, action, content and outcome of  
261 professionalisation processes and their inter-relationships. Pettigrew (2012, p. 1316)  
262 emphasised that a process analysis considering inter-relationships among context, action,

263 content and outcome is ‘one of the greatest inductive challenges’ for process researchers. To  
264 meet the required standards and manage such an in-depth analysis, focusing on one case is  
265 appropriate (Yin 2014). A qualitative single-case study design enables conducting an in-depth  
266 analysis of the NSF’s long-term professionalisation processes, capturing the complexity of  
267 this process and gaining a holistic understanding of the phenomenon (Skille 2013). The main  
268 criterion for the selection of a suitable NSF for this case study was that the NSF underwent a  
269 fundamental professionalisation process from a volunteer-administered to a professionally-  
270 led NSF (e.g. employment of first paid staff, formalisation of documents) during the last 20  
271 years. Processes older than 20 years are difficult to reconstruct because of missing documents  
272 and faulty memories (Yin 2014). This criterion was selective because the larger, highly  
273 professionalised NSFs began these crucial professionalisation processes earlier, and many  
274 smaller NSFs are still volunteer-administered. Combined with a more pragmatic criterion of  
275 accessibility of data (e.g. board meeting minutes, interviews), which was relevant to  
276 reconstruct the process, we selected the Swiss Orienteering Federation (SOF) as our research  
277 subject.

278         SOF is a member of the International Orienteering Federation and promotes  
279 orienteering sports (foot-orienteering, ski-orienteering, bike-orienteering) in Switzerland.  
280 Orienteering is a well-known sport in Switzerland; however, the NSF, with its 11 regional  
281 federations, 90 clubs and 8539 members, is small. Despite its non-Olympic status, SOF has  
282 reached the second-highest grant classification, mainly because of the constant international  
283 success of elite and young Swiss athletes. In the early 2000s, SOF was completely managed  
284 by volunteers. Nowadays, SOF has nearly eight paid full-time staff equivalents (i.e.  
285 permanent staff and part-time paid mandates). Although the NSF has grown only marginally  
286 in size (i.e. associated clubs and members), it has professionalised instruments and  
287 documents, organisational structure and staff. In their study on professionalisation designs

288 among Swiss NSFs, Lang *et al.* (2018) examined professionalisation types among Swiss  
289 NSFs and classified the SOF in a group with primarily Olympic NSFs, whose  
290 professionalisation design is characterised by a particular focus on the professionalisation of  
291 the sport sector (i.e. paid trainers and support staff).

292

### 293 ***Data collection***

294 We collected organisational documents (e.g. strategic concepts, organigrams) and archival  
295 minutes from board meetings and general assemblies from 2002 to 2018, because an initial  
296 screening of documents showed that the first context factors leading to the initiation of the  
297 first crucial professionalisation processes within the SOF came up in 2002. Thus, we  
298 followed Pettigrew's (1997) suggestion to analyse a period of at least 12 years. We held in-  
299 depth interviews with key individuals of SOF (for an overview of collected data, see Table 1)  
300 to triangulate the data and supplement the information from documents. The interviewees and  
301 period of analysis were defined on the basis of an initial screening of organisational  
302 documents and archival minutes and in agreement with the current CEO. The criteria for the  
303 choice of interviewees were that they were (1) active in the NSF during overlapping spans of  
304 the analysed period (2002–2018), (2) key actors in the crucial professionalisation processes  
305 and (3) accessible for interviews. Because of the size of SOF and the few changes in key  
306 positions, the number of key actors was small. Three interviews were conducted in 2015 and  
307 captured the period from 2002 to 2015 retrospectively. The data on SOF's professionalisation  
308 processes reached saturation after these three interviews. At the beginning of 2019, we  
309 conducted another interview to discuss developments in the last three years and to answer any  
310 questions that came up during preliminary analysis of documents and interviews from 2002  
311 to 2015. The interviews lasted between 69 and 99 minutes and were transcribed verbatim.

312

313 [Table 1 about here]

314

### 315 *Data analysis*

316 Data analysis began with a screening of organisational documents and archival minutes to  
317 gain an overview of the data and identify the potential interview partners and period of  
318 analysis. In a first step, the minutes of board meetings and general assemblies from 2002 to  
319 2018 (including appendices) were reduced to information relevant to SOF's  
320 professionalisation, to compile a chronological sequence (see Yin 2014) of context, action,  
321 content and outcome. This was the most fundamental and extensive part of the analysis.  
322 Organisational documents (e.g. organigrams, organisation regulations, strategic concepts)  
323 assisted in this step. While the documents provided only first insights into how processes  
324 were conducted (i.e. actions), the interviews mainly served to explore actions as a second  
325 step. When feasible, we cross-checked the information gleaned in the interviews against the  
326 document sources, and vice versa, to triangulate the data (see Yin 2014).

327 For content analysis, a 'start list' of codes was deduced from Nagel *et al.*'s (2015)  
328 framework of professionalisation, which provided the deductive frame of the analysis.  
329 However, we created additional codes using inductive descriptive and causation coding. We  
330 applied descriptive coding to identify the content of SOF's professionalisation processes and  
331 then assigned contexts, actions and outcome to the identified contents using causation coding  
332 (see Miles *et al.* 2014) (for an example see Table 2). We subsequently re-analysed contexts,  
333 actions and contents independent of the chronology using descriptive and pattern coding (see  
334 Miles *et al.* 2014) to reduce them to a smaller number of themes (for an example see Table  
335 3). We re-read the documents and transcripts to compare codes and, when necessary, merged,  
336 re-named or removed them. This procedure assisted in maintaining the trustworthiness of the  
337 data analysis and limiting the extent of researcher subjectivity (Miles *et al.* 2014). The lead

338 author developed the codes, while a co-author, who closely accompanied the research process  
339 (e.g. attended interviews), checked the identified codes. Pattern coding was applied to  
340 determine the relevant contexts and actions of professionalisation processes (RQ1). The first-  
341 order themes of pattern coding described the identified contexts, actions and contents in more  
342 detail. The combination of causation and pattern coding served to illuminate how contexts  
343 and actions shape the outcome of the professionalisation processes (i.e. inter-relationships;  
344 RQ2). The content analysis was computer assisted with Atlas.ti, which helped manage the  
345 large number of documents. The selected quotations for the results section were translated  
346 from German into English.

347

348 [Tables 2 and 3 about here]

349

## 350 **Results**

### 351 *Identification of the relevant contexts and actions (RQ1)*

352 We summarise the contents of professionalisation in the period analysed to foster  
353 understanding of the case and the identified contexts and actions. We classified the identified  
354 contents into (1) *creation and formalisation of instruments and documents* (i.e. strategy,  
355 communication concept, marketing concept, allocation of roles and competencies, working  
356 contracts, sponsoring contracts and organisation regulations), (2) *employment of paid staff*  
357 (i.e. paid secretary, paid trainers, paid mandates and paid employees in the executive office)  
358 and (3) *changes in organisational structure* (i.e. mandates, establishment of an executive  
359 office and reorganisation of organisational structure, including reduction of board members,  
360 new structure of commissions and departments and appointment of a CEO).

361 We classified the contexts of the SOF's professionalisation processes into (1)  
362 *impositions by external stakeholders* (i.e. impositions as a condition of government funds and

363 sponsor money), (2) *expectations of external stakeholders* (i.e. expectations of sponsors,  
364 event organisers, Swiss Olympic and the FOSPO), (3) *expectations of staff* (e.g. coaches), (4)  
365 *change in positions* (e.g. new president), (5) *increasing financial resources* (e.g. from  
366 sponsors or Swiss Olympic), (6) *decreasing financial resources* (e.g. from sponsors or Swiss  
367 Olympic), (7) *problematic organisational structure* (e.g. too much operative work among  
368 board members) and (8) *priorities* (e.g. higher prioritisation of an event other than  
369 professionalisation processes).

370 We identified the following actions during SOF's professionalisation processes: (1)  
371 *appointed working groups*, (2) *participative preparation of decisions*, (3) *creation and usage*  
372 *of supporting documents*, (4) *usage of sustainable finances*, (5) *insufficient preparation of*  
373 *processes*, (6) *realistic time management*, (7) *promoting individuals* and (8) *resisting*  
374 *individuals*. For working groups, a balanced selection of experienced group members (i.e.  
375 representatives for the different affected parties) was important, and an external consultant  
376 was deemed helpful. Promoting individuals were usually board members, particularly the  
377 president, or paid employees who helped foster the process in its preparation and  
378 implementation phase. They were persistent and convincing and were appointed for this 'job'  
379 if they did not take the initiative themselves. Resisting individuals were mainly board  
380 members and club presidents who did not agree with the professionalisation plans or  
381 decisions (e.g. critique, counter votes). Such resistance led to deceleration or stagnation of the  
382 professionalisation processes and to dissatisfaction of the resisting people if the plans were  
383 implemented despite the resistance. Participative preparation of decisions included  
384 transparent and long-term advance information and voting, with multiple options to choose  
385 for all affected parties. Documents (e.g. strategy) supported lobbying and, thus, the progress  
386 or even success of a process; if these did not exist, they were created. Professionalisation  
387 processes required time because of the limited availability of voluntary workers, the need for



388 democratic decisions and the need to wait for other upcoming priorities (e.g. mega events).  
389 The implementation phase also required time, for example, to accommodate new situations  
390 and correct problematic outcome. Processes were insufficiently prepared if not enough lead  
391 time was calculated (e.g. communication, preparatory processes), necessary documents were  
392 not prepared or decisions were made without participation of the affected parties. Usage of  
393 sustainable finances means the decision to use long-term available financial resources for  
394 professionalisation (e.g. for the employment of permanent paid staff).

395

396 *Identification of inter-relationships among context, action and outcome (RQ2)*

397 The analysis of how contexts and actions shape outcome (i.e. inter-relationships; RQ2)  
398 showed that shorter-term professionalisation processes, which were most prevalent, usually  
399 had relatively simpler systematics than longer-term processes. Shorter-term  
400 professionalisation processes (e.g. formulation of a communication concept) were dependent  
401 on single context factors (e.g. a sponsor demanded a communication concept), which led to a  
402 single action (e.g. creation of a communication concept by a working group) and a specific  
403 outcome (e.g. satisfaction of the sponsor). However, the two key professionalisation  
404 processes in the case of SOF—namely, the establishment of an executive office and the  
405 reorganisation of organisational structure—were longer-term processes and showed complex  
406 inter-relationships among context, action and outcome (i.e. multiple inter-related context  
407 factors from different organisational levels, a long-term action phase and both positive and  
408 negative outcome). To understand the mechanisms of such complex processes, we analysed  
409 these two key processes in detail with regard to RQ2. We reconstruct these two processes in  
410 the following paragraphs with separate sub-sections for context, action and outcome, to track  
411 the inter-relationships among contexts, actions and outcome. The contexts and actions

412 identified under RQ1 appear in italics in the text. We address the question of how these  
413 contexts and actions shape the outcome of the processes (RQ2) in the discussion section.

414

415 *Establishment of an executive office: context*

416 One of the main catalysts for the professionalisation of SOF was the combination of the  
417 world orienteering championship (WOC) 2003 in Switzerland and the sCOOL project, which  
418 is a long-term event series in Swiss schools intended to connect young generations with the  
419 orienteering sport. A Swiss bank began sponsoring the sCOOL project after an extraordinary  
420 sCOOL event in connection with the WOC 2003 (*increasing financial resources*). At the  
421 same time, the WOC brought a high workload to the secretary, who at the time was a  
422 volunteer (*problematic organisational structure*). During the preparation for the WOC 2003,  
423 SOF began paying the secretary a salary, who became the first paid staff for the SOF.  
424 However, ‘[the secretary] had an extreme amount of work and was still not well paid for this  
425 work. She was a paid volunteer’ (*problematic organisational structure*; former vice  
426 president, July 8, 2015). SOF realised that it was becoming more difficult to find volunteers  
427 for administrative work. Another problem was that the voluntary secretary was not reachable  
428 during office hours, which stakeholders (e.g. sponsors, Swiss Olympic, event organisers)  
429 increasingly expected (*expectations of external stakeholders*). Furthermore, the commission  
430 presidents, who were also members of the board, had too much administrative work  
431 (*problematic organisational structure*). Therefore, the SOF considered establishing an  
432 executive office to be responsible for the main administrative tasks. The president of the  
433 organising committee of the WOC 2003 pushed this process (*expectations of staff*).

434 In 2004, the sCOOL sponsor also decided to support the national team and a new  
435 international elite event and thus became SOF’s main sponsor (*increasing financial*  
436 *resources*). SOF’s young talent, which won WOC titles in 2001, 2003 and 2004 and was the

437 overall World Cup winner in 2002 and 2004, might have been one reason sponsoring the  
438 national team was attractive to the sponsor. In the course of this extended engagement, the  
439 *expectations of the sponsor* were growing:

440       The sponsor counted the number of articles and pictures in journals per year and  
441       showed us the statistics. In the end, the sponsor wanted us to sell ourselves better. He  
442       said we need to have a communication position, higher quality of the magazine, more  
443       professionalised website, photo archive of the top athletes.... Those were relatively  
444       clear expectations of the sponsor, which pushed this process [of the establishment of an  
445       executive office]. On the other hand, our athletes benefited from the sponsoring.

446       (Former president, June 8, 2015)

447

448 *Establishment of an executive office: action*

449 After the WOC 2003, a *working group* was appointed to analyse the sustainable functioning  
450 and financing of SOF because paid work appeared unavoidable in the future. The working  
451 group concluded that a combination of voluntary work on the board and paid administration  
452 was the only long-term solution to secure the sustainable development of SOF. The working  
453 group also charged the board with developing a strategic concept as a *supporting document* to  
454 promote the objective of establishing an executive office. The new president (elected in 2004)  
455 and the vice president led and promoted this strategic process (*promoting individuals*). They  
456 appointed another *working group* to develop SOF's strategy 2005–2010, thereby focusing on  
457 including all relevant parties within the SOF, such as representatives of regional federations,  
458 clubs, young members and women (*participative preparation of decisions*).

459       The strategy 2005–2010 included the aim to establish an executive office. In 2006, a  
460 *working group* focusing on financial resources developed three options for the structure of  
461 the executive office. Two options included raising membership and race entry fees; the third,

462 more extensive option included charging additional sponsoring fees. The working group  
463 emphasised the relevance of the *usage of sustainable finances* (i.e. long-term available  
464 financial resources). The working group also created a *supporting document* for lobbying,  
465 which stated the reasons for an executive office, its tasks and the benefit for clubs and  
466 members. In total, the results of the working group were presented four times in annual and  
467 extraordinary general assemblies. Two times the delegates had to confirm the proceedings of  
468 the preparation process (*participative preparation of decisions*). ‘The preparation process  
469 needed two years’ time’ (*realistic time management*; former vice president, July 8, 2015).

470 There was also scepticism. The clubs were not our friends that time. Young club  
471 presidents supported the attempt but the idea was suspect to older club presidents.

472 There was also critique among the board members (*resisting individuals*). It is clear,  
473 nowadays, more people support the decision but in the beginning it was not as  
474 unanimous. (Former vice president, July 8, 2015)

475 The executive office began the operative work in 2008.

476

#### 477 *Establishment of an executive office: outcome*

478 The commission presidents were required to delegate administrative work to the executive  
479 office. While this worked well for certain commissions, other commission presidents resisted  
480 doing so (*resisting individuals*). ‘They said that they did this work for 30 years voluntarily.  
481 They will still do this, why do we need an executive office for these tasks?’ (former  
482 president, June 8, 2015).

483 The first two or three years, I talked repeatedly to the commission presidents to  
484 convince them to transfer their administrative work to the executive office. I wrote this  
485 concept and I wanted to implement it. I treated, punched, enslaved, and maybe also  
486 convinced them until I succeeded (*promoting individuals*). However, there were a few

487 critical minds from the beginning and they were the same who resisted in the realisation  
488 phase as long as they were part of the board (*resisting individuals*). After two, three  
489 years they quit. The resistance declined continuously (*realistic time management*).

490 (Former president, June 8, 2015)

491 The executive office had mainly positive consequences at the federation and external  
492 environment levels. The secretary was no longer overloaded, and commission presidents  
493 were relieved of too much administrative work. Furthermore, the executive office contributed  
494 to meet the expectations of stakeholders. On the internal environment level, individual  
495 members were usually not involved in the executive office's work.

496

497 *First attempt at reorganisation of organisational structure: context*

498 The new president elected in 2007 (*change in positions*) decided to re-analyse and update the  
499 strategic goals in a working group, though the strategic cycle 2005–2010 was not yet  
500 finished. In addition to making minor adaptations to the strategic concept, the respective  
501 working group concluded that the board was too large (i.e. 14 members) and that many board  
502 members completed too many executive-level tasks (*problematic organisational structure*).  
503 Therefore, the group recommended that the organisational structure be 'reorganised' in  
504 connection with the establishment of the executive office. Thus, the statutes were updated in  
505 the context of the establishment of the executive office and mandated a separation of strategic  
506 and operative tasks.

507

508 *First attempt at reorganisation of organisational structure: action*

509 Until the operative start of the executive office in 2008, the board was not concerned with the  
510 reorganisation, though the working group in the context of the update of strategic goals  
511 emphasised its necessity (*insufficient preparation of processes*). However, because the new

512 statutes mandated a separation of strategic and operative tasks (*supporting document*), the  
 513 board discussed the reorganisation of organisational structure in the first board meeting after  
 514 the operative start of the executive office. One board meeting later, the president proposed  
 515 four options for a new board structure in the board meeting (lacking *participative preparation*  
 516 *of decisions*). However, some board members resisted this attempt for reorganisation  
 517 (*resisting individuals*) because they did not agree with the president's propositions. 'I made  
 518 an attempt that time, we discussed about the options to decrease the number of board  
 519 members.... I did not succeed. Each commission president who would have been eliminated  
 520 feared that his or her department would drown' (former president, June 8, 2015).  
 521 Furthermore, 'they did not want to lose the financial autonomy' (CEO, January 9, 2019).

522

523 *First attempt at reorganisation of organisational structure: outcome*

524 The discussion was adjourned, and subsequently, the president was appointed the role of the  
 525 CEO.

526 I had the chance, I had the time, I took the time, I could arrange it with my private life.

527 However, I knew that in the mid-term (*realistic time management*), the executive office  
 528 had to overtake more operative work than they did at this time. This thought faded into  
 529 the background, simply because of the WOC 2012 (*priorities*) and after the WOC my  
 530 term was over. (Former president, June 8, 2015)

531

532 *Second attempt at reorganisation of organisational structure: context*

533 In 2014, a new president was elected (*change in positions*). 'In my first year as a president, I  
 534 heard comments of board members several times that the board is sluggish because there are  
 535 too many board members and too many operative discussions' (president, April 1, 2015). In  
 536 particular, the president was overloaded (*problematic organisational structure*). 'There were

537 such dynamics in these discussions among board members that I realised we have to take  
538 action' (president, April 1, 2015). In addition, Swiss Olympic, FOSPO and sponsors  
539 preferred a single contact person with decision-making authority (*expectations of external*  
540 *stakeholders*). Up to that time, the head of the executive office handled mainly administrative  
541 tasks and had no power to make decisions (*problematic organisational structure*). Therefore,  
542 the board discussed changing the position of the head of the executive office to the CEO as  
543 part of the reorganisation. The board decided to conduct a workshop to determine the  
544 organisational structure.

545

546 *Second attempt at reorganisation of organisational structure: action*

547 At the beginning of 2015, a *working group* of five people prepared two workshops led by an  
548 external consultant and accompanied by the president of another Swiss NSF, who was  
549 experienced with reorganisation processes. To prepare for the workshop, the group evaluated  
550 the objectives defined in the strategy 2011–2016 (*supporting document*) and defined three  
551 options for a new organisational structure. The workshops were subsequently held with the  
552 whole board (*participative preparation of decisions*).

553 It happened very fast and it was surprising to me that the commissions could be  
554 subordinated to the executive office in these two workshops. We followed the model of  
555 a private company.... There was a common sense, the vision and the goals were clear  
556 but I do not know why. The president was fully committed to this process and the  
557 proposed changes, this might be a reason (*promoting individuals*). Furthermore, we  
558 trusted the external consultant and he did not avoid uncomfortable discussions. (CEO,  
559 January 9, 2019)

560 The results of the workshop were sent to the club presidents to be discussed at the presidents'  
561 conference at the end of 2015. The results were also discussed with the regional federations

562 *(participative preparation of decisions)*. ‘We invested a lot of time to communicate the  
563 results transparently *(realistic time management)*. This might be the reason that the general  
564 assembly accepted changes in statutes and organisation regulations with very few abstentions  
565 and counter votes’ (CEO, January 9, 2019). The board was reduced from 14 to seven  
566 members, the head of the executive office became the CEO of SOF and the commissions  
567 were restructured.

568

569 *Second attempt at reorganisation of organisational structure: outcome*

570 The positive outcome included the reduction of the number of board members and the  
571 discharge of the president of operative work. The consequences for the external environment  
572 were also positive:

573 Swiss Olympic praised us very much for this initiative and also the FOSPO is glad to  
574 have one single point of contact. It is good that the person who is in the meetings is the  
575 same who signs the contract. This person is also the one contacted when something  
576 does not work. (CEO, January 9, 2019)

577 As a negative outcome, the roles of the new executive office and the board remain somewhat  
578 unclear (e.g. who decides what in which case; *insufficient preparation of processes*) and the  
579 board still does not think strategically enough. ‘This is an important part of the whole  
580 process, which is yet to come’ (CEO, January 9, 2019).

581

## 582 **Discussion**

### 583 *Mechanisms of professionalisation processes*

584 The analysis of contexts (RQ1) served to differentiate between imposed and self-regulated  
585 professionalisation processes within the SOF. While most of the analysed processes were  
586 self-regulated by the SOF, we also identified processes that were externally imposed by



587 Swiss Olympic (e.g. the creation of a promotion concept for young and high-performance  
588 athletes) or the sponsor (e.g. paid mandates for the sCOOL project and a part-time  
589 communication position), which provided financial resources in return for these  
590 professionalisation processes. In consideration of the research gap identified in the literature  
591 review, the subsequent analyses focused on the self-regulated professionalisation processes.

592         The question of how the contexts and actions identified under RQ1 shape outcome (i.e.  
593 inter-relationships; RQ2) contributed to specify the mechanisms of professionalisation  
594 processes on the basis of Nagel *et al.*'s (2015) and Pettigrew's (1997) frameworks. The  
595 results show that the identified contexts have either a promoting (e.g. increase in financial  
596 resources) or a hindering (e.g. other priorities) influence on whether actors take action to  
597 initiate a professionalisation process (see also Ruoranen *et al.* 2018). If the promoting  
598 contexts outweigh the hindering ones, the process is initiated. For example, the pressure from  
599 staff and stakeholders on the SOF to establish an executive office was stronger than the  
600 financial barriers. The subsequent action phase can be differentiated into preparation (i.e.  
601 preparation for the voting in the board or general assembly about the realisation of the  
602 process), decision making (i.e. decision about whether or not the process is being realised)  
603 and realisation (i.e. realisation of the process after the decision). Just as contexts do, actions  
604 have either a promoting or a hindering influence on the next process step, and promoting  
605 actions need to outweigh hindering actions for the process to continue. In addition, the action  
606 phase is co-determined by contexts (see also Pettigrew, 1997). SOF's president, for example,  
607 promoted the initiation of the preparation of the first attempt at reorganisation of the  
608 organisational structure; however, the hindering actions of resisting board members and the  
609 higher priority of the upcoming WOC 2012 (i.e. context) outweighed this action so the board  
610 decided not to realise the reorganisation at that time.

611           If promoting contexts and actions outweigh hindering contexts and actions in each  
612 process step (i.e. before initiation, during preparation and during realisation), the content of  
613 professionalisation can be realised, which leads to the satisfaction of those who promoted the  
614 process, such as stakeholders, staff or board members (i.e. intended outcome). However,  
615 hindering contexts and actions, which are outweighed by promoting contexts and actions, can  
616 produce an unintended outcome of the professionalisation process (e.g. dissatisfaction of  
617 commission presidents, which resisted the establishment of an executive office).

618           The results further show that the professionalisation processes do not necessarily end  
619 after having produced an outcome. Instead, the outcome can lead to a new professionalisation  
620 process (e.g. the process of establishing an executive office led to a follow-up process of the  
621 reorganisation of organisational structure). In addition, side-actions and side-contents (e.g.  
622 formulation of a strategy to support the process) can be initiated during or after a  
623 professionalisation process.

624           Previous studies on professionalisation have shown similar contexts (e.g. expectations  
625 of external stakeholders; Nagel *et al.* 2015, Ruoranen *et al.* 2018) and actions (e.g. promoting  
626 individuals, resisting individuals, insufficient preparation of processes; Skinner *et al.* 1999,  
627 O'Brien and Slack 2003, Amis *et al.* 2004a, O'Brien and Slack 2004) to those of the current  
628 study. However, we also uncovered additional contexts (i.e. problematic organisational  
629 structure, priorities) and actions (i.e. realistic time calculation, appointed working groups,  
630 creation and usage of supporting documents, participative preparation of decisions and  
631 sustainable financing) that are relevant for self-regulated professionalisation processes.  
632 Furthermore, we reconstructed the mechanisms of professionalisation processes by analysing  
633 inter-relationships among context, action, content and outcome, which has not been done in  
634 previous research and contributes to a holistic understanding of professionalisation processes.

635

636 ***Conceptualisation of the mechanisms of professionalisation processes***

637 We used the results obtained by analysing self-regulated professionalisation processes based  
638 on Nagel *et al.*'s (2015) framework of professionalisation and Pettigrew's (1997) processual  
639 approach to propose a conceptualisation of the mechanisms of professionalisation processes  
640 (see Figure 2). Such a conceptualisation does not exist to date. The results include four main  
641 conclusions. First, we identified not only promoting but also hindering contexts for  
642 professionalisation processes. This result complements Nagel *et al.*'s framework of  
643 professionalisation (see Figure 1), which considers only promoting contexts (i.e. causes).  
644 Second, the results show that actions of concerned actors are relevant to the continuation and  
645 the outcome of the process. Actions can be differentiated into preparation, decision making  
646 and realisation. Third, the outcome of professionalisation processes can be intended and  
647 unintended. Fourth, professionalisation processes can initiate subsequent processes or side-  
648 action and side-content (see arrows indicating potential additional loops in Figure 2).

649

650 [Figure 2 about here]

651

652 ***Challenges and opportunities arising from self-regulated professionalisation processes***

653 The aim of investigating the mechanisms of self-regulated professionalisation processes was  
654 to unpack the challenges and opportunities arising from these processes. The analysis of  
655 inter-relationships among context, action and outcome (RQ2) showed that the timing of self-  
656 regulated professionalisation processes (i.e. when to initiate the process with respective  
657 actions) can be adapted to organisation-specific contexts (e.g. priorities, changes in position,  
658 availability of sustainable financial resources), which is an opportunity for self-regulated  
659 processes. Furthermore, the non-existent time constraints during the action phase enable a  
660 realistic time calculation, appointment of working groups, creation and usage of supporting

661 documents, participative preparation of decisions and reduction of insufficiently prepared  
662 processes. These actions contribute to a successful preparation and realisation of  
663 professionalisation processes. In addition, the results show that self-regulated  
664 professionalisation processes create the opportunity to adapt the content of the  
665 professionalisation processes to the NSF's and its stakeholders' expectations (see also Fahlén  
666 *et al.* 2015), whereas the content of imposed professionalisation processes is specified by  
667 sport policy.

668         The analysis of contexts and actions showed that the successful initiation of the  
669 preparation phase of a professionalisation process is a major challenge of self-regulated  
670 professionalisation processes, given other options for investing financial and human  
671 resources (i.e. priorities). Therefore, internal and external expectations, which put pressure on  
672 the NSF, are necessary to convince employees and members of a self-regulated  
673 professionalisation process. After a self-regulated process is initiated, the non-existent time  
674 constraints can be challenging and may result in slow or stagnating processes during both the  
675 preparation and realisation phases of a process. In particular, the preparation phase is  
676 intensive and time-consuming and could be shortened by political impositions, including  
677 implementation instructions (e.g. Amis *et al.* 2004a). However, political impositions do not  
678 necessarily lead to successful completion of a professionalisation process (Amis *et al.* 2004a,  
679 Green and Houlihan 2006, Fahlén *et al.* 2015).

680         Regarding the identified challenges and opportunities, a predominantly self-regulated  
681 sport policy system enables greater organisation specificity of the professionalisation  
682 processes (i.e. timing, content) but entails risks of less control over and effectiveness of  
683 NSFs' professionalisation processes and an 'illusory freedom' for NSFs. Similar results can  
684 be found in sport policy implementation literature regarding imposed and self-regulated  
685 policy implementation processes (e.g. Green and Houlihan 2006, Fahlén *et al.* 2015).

686 However, these studies do not analyse professionalisation processes specifically. Literature  
687 on professionalisation, in turn, has not differentiated between imposed and self-regulated  
688 professionalisation processes to date. Therefore, the results complement existing literature on  
689 professionalisation. In light of the results, we recommend the imposition of basic  
690 professionalisation processes on all NSFs (e.g. existence of a strategy) because the challenges  
691 of self-regulated processes outweigh the opportunities in this case. However, for far-reaching  
692 professionalisation processes (e.g. shift of decision-making authority from volunteer to paid  
693 staff), the opportunities arising from self-regulated professionalisation processes might  
694 outweigh the challenges, at least when the same impositions are defined for all NSFs. In the  
695 end, sport policy makers need to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of self-regulated  
696 professionalisation processes to determine the extent to which sport policy imposes  
697 professionalisation processes on NSFs.

698

### 699 *Limitations and future research*

700 This single-case study served to improve the understanding and conceptualisation of the  
701 mechanisms of professionalisation processes. However, an analysis of other cases that  
702 involve relevant contexts, actions and possible intended and unintended outcome of  
703 professionalisation is necessary to complement Figure 2. In particular, previous research on  
704 professionalisation processes has widely neglected relevant actions during professionalisation  
705 processes. While this study focused on self-regulated professionalisation processes, an  
706 analysis of both the sport policy imposed and self-regulated professionalisation processes  
707 would yield more comprehensive and comparable results in terms of the challenges and  
708 opportunities arising from imposed and self-regulated professionalisation processes (e.g. is  
709 there a difference in the sustainability of the processes' outcome?). Such results would further  
710 contribute to the question of the extent to which sport policy imposes professionalisation

711 processes on NSFs. Future studies should also analyse NSFs in different countries to  
712 distinguish between impositions for all NSFs (e.g. Amis *et al.* 2004a) and organisation- or  
713 type-specific impositions (e.g. Thieme 2017) as well as between top-down and bottom-up  
714 implementation (see O’Gorman 2011) of professionalisation processes.

715         We chose the interviewees for this study within the NSF because our focus was on the  
716 proceedings of professionalisation processes. However, to ideally meet the requirements of a  
717 holistic analysis, additional primary data from the internal and external environment level  
718 would be useful (e.g. interviews with club presidents, regional federation presidents,  
719 stakeholder representatives). Furthermore, social desirability must be critically questioned  
720 because professionalisation is usually deemed a desirable process, and the interviewees might  
721 not be willing to reveal any undesired actions in which they were involved. However, the  
722 interviewees seemed to openly reflect on both positive and negative actions. Furthermore,  
723 two interviewees were no longer active in the NSF by the time of data collection. Another  
724 challenge was that the analysed period of 17 years was long, so it was sometimes difficult for  
725 the interviewees to recollect situations that had occurred in the past. The triangulation of  
726 interview data, archival minutes and documents helped reduce these difficulties, as did the  
727 information from the different sources.

728         The results regarding the challenges and opportunities arising from self-regulated  
729 professionalisation processes should also prove useful for other countries with sport systems  
730 containing NSFs that govern voluntary sport clubs (e.g. diverse European countries,  
731 Australia, Canada), because each of these governments is confronted with the question of the  
732 extent to which sport policy imposes professionalisation processes on NSFs. The results of  
733 the relevant contexts and actions can be useful for sport managers in diverse sport systems,  
734 because NSFs in sport systems with more restrictive impositions in terms of  
735 professionalisation are also allowed to conduct self-regulated professionalisation processes,

736 as long as they do not contravene the regulations. Furthermore, imposed professionalisation  
737 processes may also benefit from promoting contexts and actions.

738

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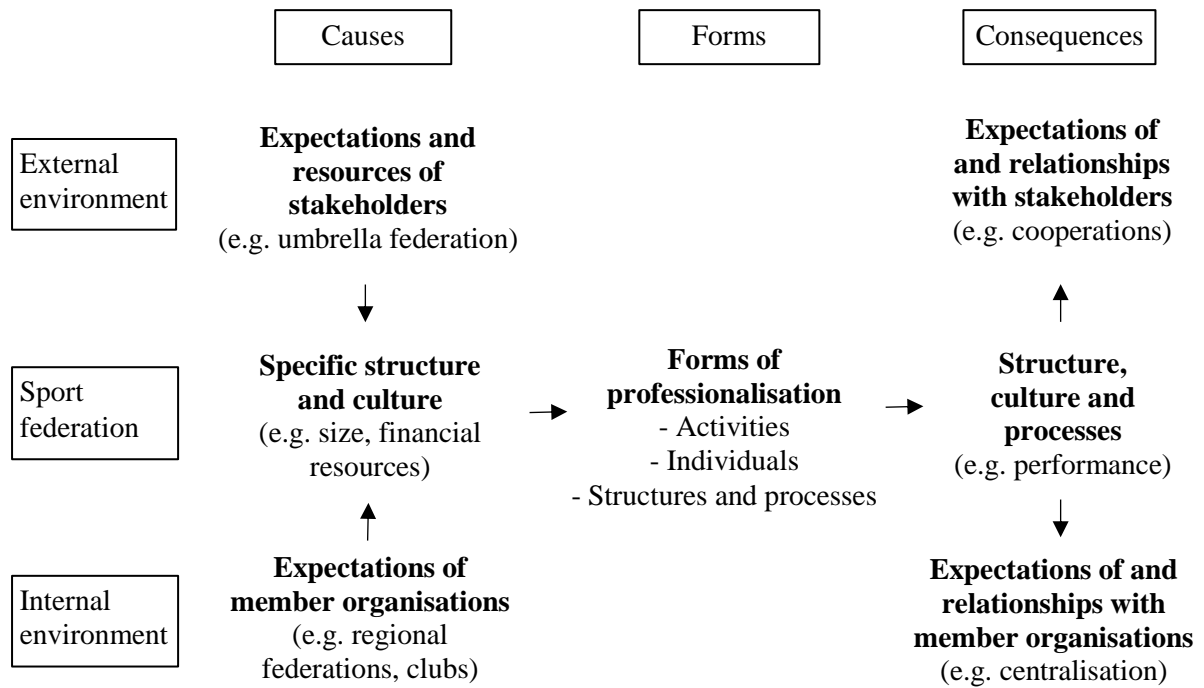


Figure 1. Multi-level framework for analysing professionalisation in sport federations (condensed form of Nagel et al., 2015, p. 412).

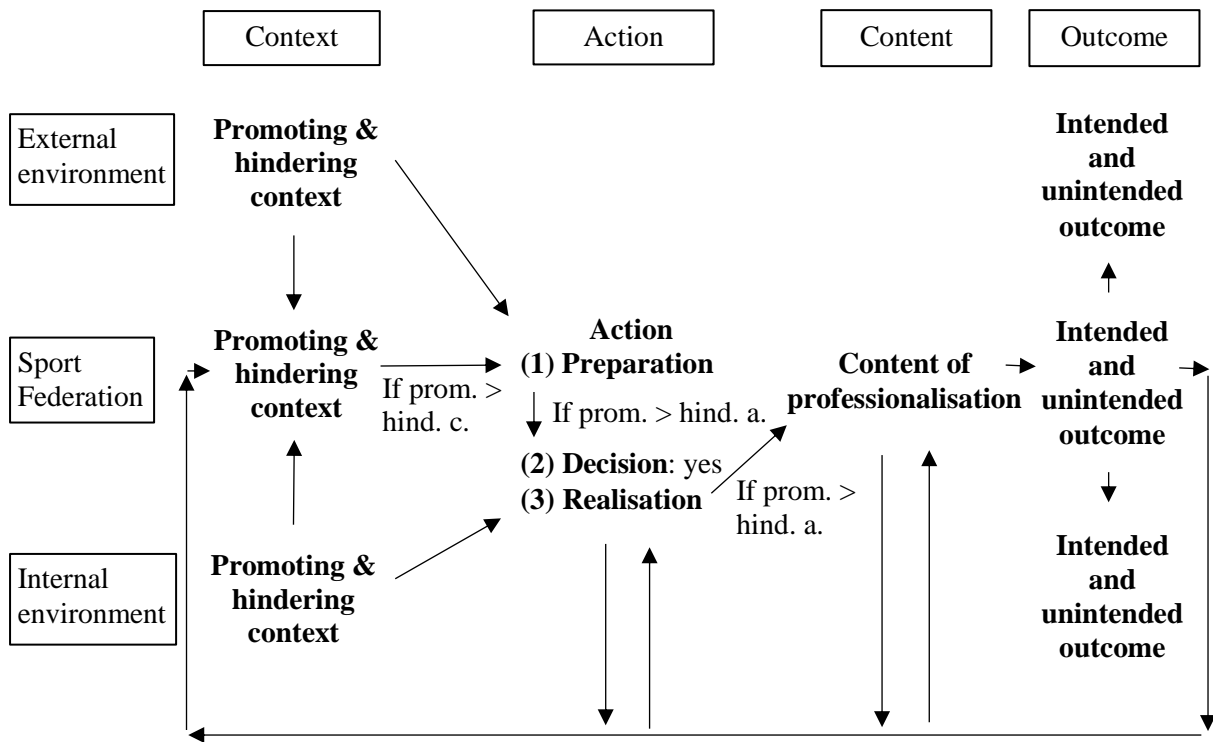


Figure 2. Conceptualisation of the mechanisms of professionalisation processes.

Table 1. Collected data.

Source	Date	Details
Archival minutes		
Board meeting minutes	2002–2018	104 documents
Relevant appendices	2002–2018	116 documents
General assembly minutes	2002–2018	10 documents
Organisational documents		
Mission statement	2018	1 document
Organigrams	2010; 2018	2 documents
Organisation regulations	2010; 2018	2 documents
Statutes	2017	1 document
Strategies incl. appendix	2005–2010; 2011–2016; 2017–2022	3 documents
Marketing strategy	2014	1 document
Annual reports	2002–2018	14 documents
Interviews		
Group interview: President and head of executive office	April 1, 2015	President since 2014; head of executive office 2014–2016, then CEO
Former president	June 8, 2015	President 2007–2014
Former vice president	July 8, 2015	Vice president 2004–2007, member of the board since 1993
CEO	January 9, 2019	CEO since 2017, former head of executive office

Table 2. Example for causation coding.

No.	Context	Action	Content	Outcome
1	World orienteering championships 2003, increasing workload	Decision of the board to pay the secretary	Payment of secretary	Better conditions for secretary but still not ideal
2	Process to establish an executive office	Appointment of working group	Strategy 2005-2010	Supporting document for the establishment of an executive office
3	New president 2004	Initiative to formalise roles and competencies of board members	Document of roles and competencies of board members	Clarification of roles and competencies
4	Pressure from the sponsor to improve communication activities	Initiative of head of commission communication	Paid mandate for commission communication (20%)	First communication concept; new webpage; double mandate
...	...	...	...	...

*Note.* The information is ordered by the date of completion of the process



Table 3. Example for descriptive and pattern coding.

Codes	First-order themes	Second-order themes
Three options for executive office	Multiple options to chose	Participative preparation of decisions
Four options for reorganisation (first attempt)		
Three options for reorganisation (second attempt)		
Delegates vote for desired option	Voting for options	
Board discusses options		
Board agrees for one option		
Board confirms constitution of working group		
Options were presented four times		
Delegates voted two times for proceeding of the process	Transparent advance information	
Transparent communication of results		
Visits in regional federations to explain intentions of new strategy		
Information for club through regional federations	Participative advance information	
Common sense among decision makers		
Unanimous voting	Common sense	
Only few counter votes		