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**Governance Code for Sport**

**International Travel Policy**

Guidance Notes

Disclaimer

Sport Ireland is making available a range of resources including guidance notes, policy documents and templates for selected areas aligned to the Governance Code for Sport which will support sport organisations, boards, management and staff in the development of relevant governance processes and procedures particular to their own organisation.

For the avoidance of doubt, the final decision on the nature, type, extent and format of approved governance policies, procedures and processes for each organisation is a matter for the board / highest governing structure of the organisation and the resources and material provided may assist the approval process.

This document is not, nor is it intended to be, a definitive statement of the law and it does not constitute legal advice.

This document is not a substitute for professional advice from an appropriately qualified source and it is recommended that sport organisations consult their governing document or obtain their own independent legal advice where necessary. Sport Ireland does not accept any responsibility or liability for any errors, inaccuracies or omissions in this document.

**Why an organisation needs an international travel policy?**

An international travel policy is useful for organisations which would have numbers of athletes/participants competing on its behalf overseas, and especially where those athletes are underage. The international travel policy should provide clear direction on communications, delegations, accreditation, etc., as well as short-term changes in the case of a pandemic. It should provide a clear framework and roadmap for the athletes, athletes families, coaches and officials, and helps them understand both the logistical and communications elements, as well as expected behaviours. It shows transparency within the organisation, and that a clear process has been defined, and one that that is designed with the best welfare of the athlete at its heart.

Having a published and transparent international travel policy can help the organisation avoid potential welfare and safeguarding issues. Having an international travel policy is part of a suite of sporting, rule book, and athlete related documentation that an effective sporting organisation should develop as part of good practice and effective stakeholder communications.

Having an international travel policy speaks to all of the principles of the Code:

Principle 1: ‘Leading Our Organisation’

Principle 2: ‘Exercising Control over our Organisation’

Principle 3: ‘Being Transparent and Accountable’

Principle 4: ‘Working Effectively’

Principle 5: ‘Behaving with Integrity’

Whilst an international travel policy is not a stated requirement for compliance with the Code, it will support type C organisations (especially) to be more effective organisations with better delivery of their goals, as well as some type B organisations. Type A organisations may be less likely to be involved in a significant level of overseas competition, however some type A may still need this policy on a case-by-case basis.

There are a number of governance reasons why an international travel policy is important:

* To manage, support and hold to account those who volunteer or work on behalf of the organization, including coaches and team delegates
* To Identify risks for the organisation and decide ways of managing the risks
* To ensure effective communication with stakeholders – in this case athletes/participants and their families, as well as coaches and team delegates
* To make sure that coaches and selectors understand their: role, duties, and responsibilities
* To protect and promote the organisation’s reputation

Furthermore, from a sporting perspective, it is also important:

* To promote athlete/participant welfare
* To support coaches and selectors with logistical detail
* To provide clear logistical and communications detail to athletes and their families
* To make a potentially stressful time for athletes easier

Whose responsibility is it to develop an international travel policy?

It is the responsibility of the Board to ensure that all the principles of the Code are being upheld and delivered. Type C organisations may have a Head of Operations or Team Manager, who will likely write and manage on an ongoing basis the international travel policy. Type B (and perhaps type A) organisations will likely have a volunteer responsible for this role. Sport Ireland and the Sport Ireland Institute can help with greater specific detail around international travel.

What is an international travel policy?

An international travel policy is an operations document, which sets out the logistical and welfare detail around the travel of athletes, support staff and others in the travelling party (representing the organization) to international competition.

It should reference and be read in conjunction with:

* Safeguarding Guidelines
* Codes of Conduct
* Selection Policy Guidelines
* Rule Book

The international travel policy may include elements such as:

* Purpose and scope
* Logistical details and travel arrangements
* Departure and arrival days
* Delegation and team management
* Team meetings
* Accreditation
* Communications
* Social media usage whilst abroad
* Down-time and rest time
* Travel kit and documentation
* Contacts and emergency contacts
* Emergencies and accidents
* Insurance arrangements
* Accommodation arrangements
* Behavior and attitude expectations

How should the international policy be implemented?

The international travel policy can be implemented in the following ways:

* Displayed on the website
* Shared with development squads
* Part of training for team managers and coaches
* Made available via company intranet and shared files
* Pre-travel education and logistic familiarization is recommended for all team members

It should be regularly reviewed to ensure it is still up to date, and keeping abreast of any changes in legislation (for example around safeguarding and child protection for underage athletes) or common practice. Sport Ireland can support in this area.

Further links and resources

[Sport Ireland High Performance Unit](https://www.sportireland.ie/high-performance)

[Olympic Federation of Ireland](https://olympics.ie/)