

Media release

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Winter Universiade 2021 to be postponed

The Winter Universiade 2021 will take place on 11 to 21 December 2021. The Executive Committee of the International University Sports Federation (FISU) today approved a proposal to postpone the Lucerne 2021 Winter Universiade. The initial reactions from sports bodies and the region are extremely positive.

The Winter Universiade 2021 will be held on 11 to 21 December 2021 in Central Switzerland and Lenzerheide. In late August, the organisers halted the preparations for the 30th edition of this unique event, scheduled to take place in January 2021, and looked into the possibility of postponing it due to the coronavirus pandemic. "It was only thanks to enormous commitment and good collaboration between the cantons, the city of Lucerne and the main stakeholders in the sports industry and the region that we were able to present the International University Sports Federation with a proposal to postpone the event," explains President of the Organising Committee and Cantonal Councillor of Lucerne Guido Graf. Today the FISU Executive Committee approved the suggested postponement concept. "We are extremely pleased that the Winter Universiade 2021 can still take place, in spite of the pandemic-induced postponement. Here in Switzerland, where FISU also has its headquarters, we have been looking forward to this edition of our Games for many years," says FISU President Oleg Matytsin.

"Switzerland needs lighthouse projects"

The Organising Committee and Switzerland's sports world are also pleased about the decision. "Especially in difficult times, Switzerland needs lighthouse projects more than ever in sport. By postponing the Winter Universiade, Central Switzerland is making a clear statement," says Matthias Remund, the Director of the Federal Office of Sport. Swiss Olympic President Jürg Stahl adds: "Sport gives many young people an opportunity. The Winter Universiade offers a platform for important issues like high-performance sport and higher education. These topics must not be forgotten during the pandemic."

Epidemiological developments were a central element in the evaluation

In considering whether to postpone the event, the organisers not only had to find solutions for numerous organisational and sports-related problems. The evaluation of epidemiological developments also played a key role. To this end, the Organising Committee called on assistance from Daniel Koch, the former head of the Transmissible Diseases department of the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health. "I am convinced that the Winter Universiade will be able to be held in the winter of 2021-22," says Daniel Koch. His conviction is based on the belief that the authorities will be able to manage the pandemic far better in a year's time. This is partly because rapid tests are already increasing test capacities this winter, partly because a vaccine could be available by next summer. What's more, the Olympic Games in Japan will provide plenty of pointers on how safety precautions and safety measures can enable major sports events to be held.

The importance of the Winter Universiade for the region

Even in the bidding phase, a study conducted by Lucerne University of Applied Sciences into the financial benefits of the multisport event estimated that it would net the region more than CHF 70 million. "This shows the event's importance in the current crisis," says Winter Universiade Managing Director Urs Hunkeler. The tourist industry in particular sees the Winter Universiade as an important showcase. The 11 days of the event alone will generate some 35,000 overnight stays. But the region and Swiss sport in general look set to profit beyond the end of the Winter Universiade 2021. Various projects have already been launched ensuring an important legacy of the event. In particular, the world's largest multisport event for students will aim to reinforce the possibility of combining top-level sport and higher education. "The Winter Universiade is the ideal platform for creating new impulses and further improving the compatibility of study and high-performance sport in association with tertiary education establishments and specialist bodies," says Swiss University Sports President Mike Kurt.

Reactions

Guido Graf, President of the Organising Committee and Cantonal Councillor of Lucerne

"The cantons of central Switzerland and the city of Lucerne are united in supporting the Winter Universiade and all called for a postponement."

Hubert Mathis, President of the Local Organising Committee Engelberg

"Just like other Local Organising Committees, we in Engelberg lobbied hard for a postponement. We are extremely pleased that we were able to find a common solution. We are

motivated for the forthcoming preparations and look forward to being able to complete this unique project. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our local partners as well as the local authority, the Titlis cableway, the tourism and the Sports Middle School.”

Bernhard Aregger, Managing Director Swiss-Ski

“I see the postponement of the Winter Universiade as a positive sign for the sport and the entire region as well. It demonstrates the resilience of sport towards challenges and the difficult situation due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Further, it proves that the sporting community is working on sensible solutions.”

Marcel Perren, Tourism Director Lucerne Tourism

“The Winter Universiade is of enormous importance to the region and to local tourism and it offers important opportunities in the current crisis. Images of the competitions can help the region position itself as a winter sport destination for future business in key tourism target markets.”

Conrad Meier, President Lucerne Hotels

“The decision by the cantons of central Switzerland and the city of Lucerne to postpone the globally significant Winter Universiade sends an important message to our hotel industry as well as the entire tourism value chain at this challenging time.”

Christoph Böcklin, Winter Universiade Head of Delegation, Swiss University Sports

“We are extremely pleased about the postponement. Team Suisse 2021’s dream of a domestic Universiade lives on. Even though we must be patient for a little longer, this decision gives the athletes the perspective of a major sports event held under what we hope will be more normal conditions by that time.”

Bruno Staffelbach, Chancellor of the University of Lucerne

“The university/PH building will be made available to the Organising Committee in December 2021. We aim to seize this opportunity to present central Switzerland’s educational opportunities to a global audience and network ourselves internationally.”

The Winter Universiade

The Winter Universiade is the largest winter multisport event after the Winter Olympics. In 2021, the 30th edition of this unique event will take place in central Switzerland and Lenzerheide. It will be carried out as a joint project of the six cantons of Central Switzerland Lucerne, Uri, Schwyz, Obwalden, Nidwalden and Zug, as well as the city of Lucerne. The programme will comprise competitions in ten sporting disciplines held at seven venues between 11 and 21 December 2021. Some 1600 student athletes aged between 17 and 25 from more than 540 universities in 50 countries are expected to travel to Switzerland to attend.

Photos and further information on the Lucerne 2021 Winter Universiade can be found at:

www.winteruniversiade2021.ch

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