

## Media Release

Lucerne, 20 September 2021

### **The water relay for Winter Universiade 2021 has begun**

*Today, on the International Day of University Sport, the flame for Winter Universiade 2021 was ignited in Turin, which was the host venue for the very first Universiade. This year, however, no torch will be carried to Central Switzerland; instead, water will be transported. Indeed, water is an important component of Winter Universiade 2021, which is why the traditional torch relay has been replaced by a new water relay.*

Today, on the International Day of University Sport (IDUS), the Winter Universiade torch was ignited and handed over to the Winter Universiade 2021 Organising Committee in Turin, which is the traditional site for the Universiade torch-lighting ceremony. The burning torch itself only played an important role for a moment, however. That's because the Organising Committee of the biggest multisport event after the Winter Olympics, along with Switzerland's university sport federation (Swiss University Sports), decided to forego the traditional torch relay and instead highlight water as a central component. 'Water in all of its physical states is the foundation of all of the athletic disciplines that are featured at Winter Universiade', explains Urs Hunkeler, Managing Director of Winter Universiade 2021. 'Switzerland is also known as the "Water Castle of Europe", which makes water even more important for a Swiss Universiade', Hunkeler continues. The torch that was lit today was therefore used to melt ice into water in a special container. The mascot of Winter Universiade 2021, Wuli, took the container and set off on his way to Switzerland. His first stop will be the headquarters of the International University Sports Federation (FISU) in Lausanne. After that, the water relay will continue across the entire country, with stops at various colleges, universities and Winter Universiade 2021 venues, whereby additional water will be collected at each stop.

### **Platform for colleges and universities**

The water relay offers an ideal platform for Swiss colleges and universities to present themselves and their programmes for combining elite sports and study to a wide audience. 'University sports organisations have implemented such programmes in order to demonstrate that elite sports and study can be combined at Swiss universities, and that such a combination is worthy of support', says Swiss University Sports President Mike Kurt.

Swiss University Sports and Swiss Olympic work hard together to ensure that young people in Switzerland are not forced to choose between elite sports and higher education, but can instead choose both. Kurt points out how important such endeavours are, and also adds the following: 'Athletes who choose a so-called dual career place great demands on themselves and also serve as role models in society. Anyone who can manage two careers simultaneously will also develop the kinds of skills that ensure success both in sports and professional life.'

### **The Winter Universiade**

The Winter Universiade is the largest winter multisport event after the Olympic Games. In 2021 the 30th occasion of this unique event will take place in Central Switzerland and the Grisons. The organisation is a joint project of the six cantons of Central Switzerland Lucerne, Uri, Schwyz, Obwalden, Nidwalden and Zug, and the City of Lucerne. The programme from the 11 to 21 December 2021 comprises ten sports, to be contested at eight venues. Around 1600 Students aged between 17 and 25 from more than 540 universities in 50 countries are expected to attend. Universiades have been held every two years since 1959 in winter and summer and are assigned by the International University Sports Federation (FISU) to the national university sports federation of the host country and the responsible organising committee. Swiss University Sports is a member of FISU and is responsible for the selection of Swiss athletes for Universiades.

### **Swiss University Sports**

Swiss University Sports includes 18 local university sports organisations with a total of 236,000 student members. More than 80 types of sport are offered in the field of popular sports, and more than 30 in the field of elite sports. Whereas the local university sports organisations mainly organise the huge 'Sports for All' programme, Swiss University Sports has central responsibility for elite sports and the selection of national teams for the World University Championships and World University Games. Swiss University Sports also plays a major role in the two most important initiatives at the moment: 'Elite Sports & Study' (in cooperation with Swiss Olympic) and the implementation of Winter Universiade 2021 in Lucerne/Central Switzerland/Grisons.

Further information on the water relay can be found [here](#).

Pictures and more about the Lucerne 2021 Winter Universiade may be found here:  
[www.winteruniversiade2021.ch](http://www.winteruniversiade2021.ch)



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