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SLOVENIA



SLOVENIA

The land of outstanding sports achievements



WOMEN'S EHF EURO 2022
SLOVENIA • NORTH MACEDONIA • MONTENEGRO

EUROPEAN WOMEN'S HANDBALL CHAMPIONSHIP A MILESTONE FOR SLOVENIAN WOMEN'S SPORT

Slovenia is hosting the largest women's sports event since the country gained its independence. From 4 to 20 November, Celje and Ljubljana will be hosting matches of the European Women's Handball Championship, together with North Macedonia and Montenegro.

This year's European Championship will be the second major international handball competition to be hosted by our country. Slovenia hosted the European Men's Championship in 2004, which turned out to be a very successful tournament for our team. It was in Celje – the city hosting the first three matches to be played by the Slovenian women in November – that the men's team prepared a big surprise, ending up with silver medals. This was one of two highlights of Slovenian handball in the last five years – the other being an epic turnaround at the World Championship in 2017 in France, when the men won the bronze. The Slovenian men's handball team has also competed in three Olympic Games (2000, 2004 and 2016).

Meanwhile, the women have steadily been improving their game, and consolidated their position in the world of handball in recent years. Since 2016 they have participated in all European and World Championships, with competitions held each year on an alternating basis.

Since the turn of the millennium, Slovenian women's handball has had some outstanding achievements. In the years 2001 and 2003, the Ljubljana club Krim made its way to the very top of the Champions League – Europe's most elite club-level competition. Slovenia can also be proud of its exceptional left-handed handball player Ana Gros. Thanks to the hard work invested by the captain of the Slovenian team in recent years, she has earned her status as one of Europe's greatest handball stars, as proven by two awards that placed her in the best Champion's League team. She finished the 2021/22 season as the top goal scorer, and is in the top eight of the best ever goal scorers in European club competitions.

Slovenian handball dates back to 1949, when the Handball Federation of Slovenia (HFS) was founded. There were only six clubs to begin with, but this number rapidly grew over the next 25 years, and there have now been more than 100 of them in Slovenia.

A new chapter to this story began with Slovenia's independence in 1991, and the first milestone for Slovenian sport was reached by handball in 1993, when the men's team won the bronze medal at the Mediterranean Games in 1993. This was the first medal for a Slovenian team at any major competition. The women were also very successful in the following years, and have so far won four medals in the same competition.

The Slovenian women cannot wait for this competition to begin – and for many of them it will be the climax of their sporting careers. The team do not wish to raise expectations for a new milestone, but they certainly harbour hopes of a new achievement. And above all they are determined to put on unforgettable performances for the fans, who will watch them in the Zlatorog stadium in Celje and – we hope – also later in Stožice, Ljubljana.



SLOVENIA – THE LAND OF OUTSTANDING SPORTS ACHIEVEMENTS

Slovenia as a sporting country is not only known globally for the exceptional achievements of its athletes, but also because it is an outstanding organiser of major sports events. The teams of sportsmen and sportswomen we Slovenians support are part of our identity, and we can feel close to them. We celebrate with them when they win, but are also proud of them when they do not make the top rankings. They are always heroes for us. Our hearts beat as one with theirs. Slovenian sportsmen and sportswomen are heroes famous throughout the world.

SLOVENIA IS A LAND OF TOP ATHLETES

Slovenians have a close relation with sport, and we like to spend our free time engaging in various sporting activities, either indoors or outdoors. Our story is also a sporting story, as moving fills us with energy and gives us a boost in reaching our recreational as well as professional goals. So it's not surprising we are so successful in sports. Being active is simply in our genes, and we see it as part of a high-quality, balanced life. Slovenia's geographic diversity and the numerous recreational sports events held throughout the year provide a wealth of opportunities for amateurs, fans and professionals.

This is helped to a large extent by Slovenia's exceptional natural features, its good quality sports infrastructure, which receives investments from the state, the EU, and business – with close links between tourism and sport – and of course from local communities. In addition to its extensive infrastructure for sports and tourism, Slovenia has also contributed various innovations and improvements to the world of sport.

It seems impossible that a nation of just two million could achieve such success. Indeed, we are probably the only country of this size that has qualified for the highest-level competitions in team sports (football, hockey, basketball, handball, volleyball), and whose exceptional athletes have achieved top-level individual results (skiing, cross-country skiing, ski jumping, climbing, and athletics). The exceptional achievements of Slovenian sport over the past decades have set numerous important milestones, and taken Slovenian fans and their enthusiastic cheering across the globe.

Slovenia ranks second in the world when it comes to the number of Olympic medals per capita, and Slovenian sportsmen and sportswomen have won numerous world championship medals. Outstanding sports achievements, exceptional natural features, highly developed infrastructure, active programmes in nurseries, and physical education in primary and secondary schools, are only some of the factors that contribute to our life-long connection with sport and motivate us to spend a large part of our free time being active, both inside and outdoors.



Basketball playground in Celje, a support by Luka Dončić and Dallas Mavericks.
Photo: Lili Pušnik/STA

IN SLOVENIA SPORT IS A REASON TO CELEBRATE

Slovenia has school playing fields full of children, mountain huts with hikers and climbers, sports halls with professionals and amateurs, and great interest in various forms of exercise, gyms and other recreational centres throughout the country. Regular physical activity is very important for both our physical and mental health, and contributes to an overall healthy lifestyle. Slovenians are well aware of this.

Sport is a central part of our culture, and this has also been recognised by the state. In 2020, on the initiative of the Slovenian Olympic Committee – Association of Sports Federations, it declared the 23rd of September the Day of Slovenian Sport, although this is not a work-free day. On this day, Slovenians put on their sports shoes, hop on their bikes, roll out their yoga mats, jump in the pool, don their skates, and engage in many other physical activities.

It was on the 23rd September 2000 in Sydney that the Slovenian national anthem was heard for the first time at the Olympic Games. On that day, the first Olympic gold medals were won for Slovenia by the rowers Iztok Čop and Luka Špik, followed by the shooter Rajmond Debevec.

The 23rd of September is also traditionally the first day of the European Week of Sport, an initiative organised by the European Commission, whose aim is to encourage people to take part in physical activities and look after their health.

Number of Olympic medals per capita at the Beijing 2022 Olympic Games

- Norway (146,520)
- Slovenia (296,991)**
- Austria (500,355)
- Sweden (618,187)
- Switzerland (618,187)



Slovenian fans have so far proven themselves to be excellent ambassadors of Slovenia and Slovenian sports. With their fair-play cheering they made an impression wherever they were supporting Slovenian sports heroes, be it at various competitions around the world or at home. The fan's favourite shout is: "Anyone who doesn't jump isn't Slovenian!"

SOC – SPORTS UMBRELLA ORGANISATION

The Slovenian Olympic Committee – Association of Sports Federations (SOC) takes care of Slovenian sports activities on an institutional level. This is the main non-governmental sports organisation of national sectoral sports associations, which as Slovenia’s umbrella organisation for sports works to develop and connect professional sport, sport for all and sport on a local level.

There are 8,264 sports and recreational societies active under the auspices of the SOC that are recorded in the central register of Slovenian societies. These are not only for professional sportsmen and sportswomen, but also for amateurs, and play an important role in encouraging people to live high-quality, active lives.

The SOC also ensures the visual appearance of sports clubs is unified. A combination of green, blue and white has been chosen for Slovenia. The SOC advises sports organisations to use the following colour proportions when designing their national sports equipment: 50% green, 30% blue, 20% white.



The Slovenian Olympic team in the colours of the Slovenian Olympic Committee.
Photo: Aleš Fevžer

A SHORT HISTORY OF ORGANISED SPORT IN SLOVENIA

The beginnings of organised sport in Slovenia date back to 1 October 1863, when the first gymnastics society, called *Južni Sokol* (meaning Southern Hawk, or Falcon), was founded. This laid the foundations for the development of organised sport in Slovenia, the development of sport in schools and sports clubs, the training of coaching staff, and the formation of a solid base for the many achievements by our sportsmen and sportswomen.

LEGENDS OF SLOVENIAN SPORT

The path trodden by Slovenian sport has been paved by legendary sportsmen and sportswomen who have been breaking world records and pushing the boundaries of what is possible, putting us on the world map, making us proud and strengthening our national consciousness. At the same time, they encourage Slovenians to be more active and do sports at all levels.

Slovenian sport has been marked by many outstanding sportsmen and sportswomen who pushed the limits in their disciplines. Their successes have gone down in sporting history, and in Slovenia they have been made timeless by the **Sporting Heroes Hall of Fame**. Each year the Slovenian Association of Sports Journalists selects the sportsman, sportswoman, team and young hopes who will appear in the Hall of Fame. Its aim is also to preserve sports equipment connected with Slovenian sportsmen and sportswomen, and various historical sporting events.

The first Slovenian Olympic medal winner was Rudolf Cvetko, who won the silver in fencing in 1912 in Stockholm. The legendary Olympic Champion Leon Štukelj won the highest number of Olympic medals for the country – six – including three golds. So far three Slovenian sportsmen have won Olympic gold, silver and bronze – Leon Štukelj, Luka Špik and Iztok Čop.

A list of all the sportsmen and sportswomen listed in the Sporting Heroes Hall of Fame:

Year	Name and surname (discipline)
2011	Leon Štukelj (gymnastics), Miroslav Cerar (gymnastics)
2012	Rudolf Cvetko (fencing), Josip Primožič Tošo (gymnastics), Stane Derganc (gymnastics), Stanko Lorgar (athletics), Ivo Daneu (basketball), Jože Šlibar (ski jumping), Janez Polda (ski jumping), Draga Stamejčič Pokovec (athletics), Janez Žirovnik (cycling), Nataša Urbančič Bezjak (athletics), Branko Oblak (football), Aljoša Žorga (basketball), Vinko Jelovac (basketball), Mima Jaušovec (tennis), Rudi Hiti (hockey), Peter Šumi (gymnastics), Miro Steržaj (nine-pin bowling), Albin Felc (hockey), the rowing eight (4th at the Tokyo Olympics 1964)
2013	Franc Smolej (cross-country skiing), Ciril Praček (alpine skiing), Branko Zihelr (diving), Tone Cerer (swimming), Tine Mulej (alpine skiing), Janko Štefe (alpine skiing), Ivan Toplak (football), Janko Kosmina-Mario Fafangel (sailing), Tine Šrot (gymnastics), Jurij Uršič (cycling), Edvard Vecko (table tennis), Ištvan Korpa (table tennis), Tone Gale (hockey), Milan Zadel (kayaking), Stanko Topolčnik (judo), Bojan Križaj (alpine skiing), Peter Vilfan (basketball), Bojan Ropret (cycling), Boris Strel (alpine skiing), Alenka Cuderman (handball), Borut Petrič (swimming), Miran Tepeš (ski jumping), Jure Franko (alpine skiing), Primož Ulaga (ski jumping), Andrej Jelenc (whitewater kayaking), Darjan Petrič (swimming), Matjaž Debelak (ski jumping), Mateja Svet (alpine skiing)
2015	Srečko Katanec (football), Rok Petrovič (alpine skiing), Jure Zdovc (basketball), Iztok Puc (handball)
2016	Rolando Pušnik (handball), Polona Dornik (basketball)
2017	Marko Elsner (football)
2019	Alenka Dovžan (alpine skiing), Katja Koren (alpine skiing), Jure Košir (alpine skiing)



Leon Štukelj – Olympian Champion and legend of Slovenian sport.
Photo: Rasto Božič/STA

THE BATON IS NOW IN THE HANDS OF AN EXCEPTIONAL NEW GENERATION

The exceptional legacy of historical names is now in the hands of the next generation, which upholds our small country's global reputation with its annual achievements in sports competitions. Some of the greatest names include the NBA basketball players Luka Dončić and Goran Dragić, the NHL hockey player Anže Kopitar, who has won the Stanley Cup twice and is captain of the LA Kings, one of the world's best goalkeepers Jan Oblak, and Rok Možič, one of the world's most promising volleyball players.

We have a wealth of great cyclists, particularly Primož Roglič who won Olympic gold in Beijing, and the two-time winner of the Tour de France Tadej Pogačar, and also by our climber Janja Garnbret, judoka Tina Trstenjak, canoeist Benjamin Savšek, discus thrower Kristjan Čeh, ski jumper Peter Prevc, and the promising para skier Jernej Slivnik.

The retired alpine skier Tina Maze set records in the number of points won in one season – winning 2,414 in the 2012/13 season, during which she won the gold medal eleven times. Tina Maze is one of six skiers who has won in all five disciplines, and one of only three who succeeded in doing this in the same season. She won 26 races in her career, and was Olympic Champion in the downhill and giant slalom.



Luka Dončić in Goran Dragić – Slovenian basketball players in the NBA.
Photo: Nace Hočevár/STA



Janja Garnbret
Photo: Lena Drapella/STA

EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS AT THE PARALYMPIC GAMES



Para skier Jernej Slivnik.
Photo: NPC Slovenija



Franček Gorazd Tiršek with the Paralympic silver medal in Tokyo 2020.
Photo: Tinkara Zupan/STA

In Slovenia we are also exceptionally proud of the achievements of our Paralympians who represent our country in various sports disciplines. In the 30 years since Slovenia gained its independence they have won an enviable number of Paralympic medals: four gold, ten silver and nine bronze medals.

In recent years, Slovenians have been particularly successful in winning medals in air rifle shooting in the standing position, where we have been represented by Franček Gorazd Tiršek, Veselka Pevec and Franc Pinter. Successful performances in the Paralympics have also been made by Mateja Pinter – one of our most successful table-tennis players. The swimmer Darko Đurić has also made our country proud with his achievements in his discipline. Gal Jakič had a very successful sporting career, and the excellent skier Jernej Slivnik is following in his tracks.



Para swimmer Darko Đurić is one of the most successful Slovenian para-athletes.
Photo: STA

SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE

In Slovenia we are aware of the importance of investment in sports infrastructure. The many sports facilities throughout the country are our long-term investment in a healthy future. They offer all who live in Slovenia access to sport and recreation, provide our greatest talents with the possibility to train, and also make it possible for our small, Alpine country to host some of the world’s most important events.

Co-financing of investments in Slovenian sports facilities by year

Year	Data
2014	49,092,442.85 €
2015	57,327,479.68 €
2016	36,104,555.17 €
2017	35,792,536.33 €
2018	66,207,987.11 €
2019	99,965,738.36 €
2020	87,516,745.36 €

One of our latest infrastructural gems is undoubtedly the Planica Nordic Centre. This is an extremely modern complex for Nordic sports, and an example of sustainable construction and management. It boasts numerous initiatives for green mobility and clean energy. Its core activity is the provision of the best possible conditions for ski jumping, cross-country skiing and Nordic combined.

Amateur sports enthusiasts are excited by almost 10,000 kilometres of Alpine hiking trails and the 1,200 kilometre long Slovenian Mountain Trail. There are picturesque cycle routes all over the country and a gym next to each school, where recreational activities are organised alongside the regular school curriculum. There are many football pitches and basketball courts throughout Slovenia, some of them set up by the brothers Goran and Zoran Dragić – the first smart basketball courts in Slovenia.



Stožice Arena – venue of the World Volleyball Championship 2022.
Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



Planica Nordic Centre - venue of the Nordic World Championships. Photo: Planica Nordic Centre archives

MAJOR SPORTS EVENTS IN SLOVENIA

Slovenia is also an excellent organiser of major sports events, thanks to its good infrastructure and natural features. In recent years, Slovenia has hosted numerous major events, both European and World championships, as well as various tournaments on a European or World level.

Every year in Slovenia we organise major international competitions such as the annual ski flying competition in Planica, the Alpine Ski World Cup in Kranjska Gora and the Golden Fox competition, the Tour of Slovenia cycling race, the WTA tennis tournament in Portorož, and recreational athletes get excited every year about the Franja Cycle Marathon and the Ljubljana Marathon.

We have also shown our talent for organising major events with the World Rowing Championships in Bled, the European Men’s Basketball Championships in 2013, the European Men’s Volleyball Championship in 2019, the World Ski Flying Championships in 2020, the Biathlon World Championships in 2021, and the hockey tournament of World Championship Division 1/A in Ljubljana 2022.

The sporting year 2023 will begin in Slovenia with the Nordic World Ski Championships in Planica, followed by the European Rowing Championships in Bled, and the European Women’s Basketball Championship in Celje, Koper and Ljubljana.

Interesting story

Every year, the traditional multi-day Tour of Slovenia cycling race attracts some of the most famous names in world cycling. The slogan of the race, Fight for Green, reflects Slovenia’s sustainable orientation towards nature conservation. Due to the picturesque landscapes of Slovenia, the race is also attractive to many foreign cycling enthusiasts, who follow it live or through the media.

Slovenia is also traditionally visited by one of the three largest three-week cycling races, the Giro d’Italia, which is followed by a large number of cycling enthusiasts due to the successes of Primož Roglič and Tadej Pogačar. Mountain biking is also increasingly popular, with the Maribor Pohorje Hills hosting the best cyclists for European and World Cup competitions every year.

A large number of recreational cycling competitions also take place throughout Slovenia, the most popular being the Franja Marathon or the ascent of recreational cyclists to Vršič, the highest Slovenian mountain pass.



The traditional multi-day Tour of Slovenia cycling race attracts some of the most famous names in world cycling. Photo: STA



Ski jumping competition in Planica attracts thousands of visitors each year. Photo: Planica Nordic Centre archives



Arena Stožice in Ljubljana hosted world men's volleyball championship this year. Photo: Žan Kolman

SPORT AND THE ECONOMY GO HAND IN HAND

Sport is an important branch of the economy, which is driven by numerous innovative approaches, companies and innovators who develop products and services for recreational and professional sports purposes. These combine the functionality demanded by each sport with sustainable solutions.

The first amongst the fastest is Akrapovič, the world's leading manufacturer of exhaust systems for motorbikes and sports cars. These systems are famous for their enhanced performance, unmistakable sound, innovative design, light construction, quality workmanship and durability. More than 100 world champions have won their titles using Akrapovič exhaust systems.

Another significant market player is Alpina, which has been developing new technologies and materials since 1947. Among fierce global competition from other manufacturers of sports footwear, Alpina is famous for supplying cross-country ski boots to some of the world's top cross-country skiers and biathletes. At the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, competitors wearing Alpina boots won 12 Olympic medals.

One of the best-known Slovenian companies in the world is undoubtedly Elan, which has been making some of the best skis for almost 80 years. Over the last two decades alone it has received more than 70 awards for innovation, quality and design from independent institutions. Their most prominent innovations include carving skis and the revolutionary Ibox Tactix folding touring skis. Meanwhile, the production of Elan's ski jumping skis has been taken over by another Slovenian company, Slatnar.

We may also find innovative Slovenian solutions in recreational sport. Many top Slovenian athletes, who are now retired, are involved in the sports industry. The former whitewater kayaker Andraž Vehovar and retired professional cyclist Jure Berk have joined forces and are developing and manufacturing their own carbon fibre cycle parts. The one-time world-class cross-country skier Petra Majdič is innovative in the field of team building, while the Tepeš and Debelak families, which have given us some excellent ski jumpers, are producing ski jumping suits.



Slovenian ski jumper Peter Prevec with Elan skis. Photo: Anže Malovrh/STA

Slovenian science is also deeply involved with sport, especially in the field of artificial intelligence, where Slovenian scientists are among the global elite. An exceptional story is that of Primož Roglič, a one-time ski jumper who is now an extremely successful cyclist. After he was injured in a ski jumping accident, scientists at the Jožef Stefan Institute used artificial intelligence to suggest cycling as the sport in which he could potentially achieve the best results.

The former captain of the Slovenian Davis Cup tennis team, Miha Mlakar, is a scientist who combines knowledge of algorithms, artificial intelligence, data processing and sport. At the Jožef Stefan Institute he focuses primarily on applicative research, which strives to apply artificial intelligence methods to practical problems. His role and that of the team dealing with data processing is to help coaches by telling them what should be improved based on objective data. Miha Mlakar is mostly involved with tennis, but would also like to apply this knowledge to other sports.

SPORT IS IN US FROM AN EARLY AGE

The achievements of our athletes are no coincidence, as sport is something we are in touch with from an early age in Slovenia. Slovenian children engage in various physical activities from a young age, and in nurseries they already have the option of choosing extra activities such as swimming, mountain walking and dancing. This means children in nurseries – and 94% of all children in Slovenia attend one – are involved in various physical activities.

These children are thus able to develop their motor skills, and can join different programmes, such as Mali sonček (Little Sunshine), which includes mountain walking, skiing, gymnastics and many other sports, and Ciciban planinec (Ciciban the Hiker).

In primary schools the two programmes continue as Zlati sonček (Golden Sunshine) and Mladi planinec (Young Hiker), there is also the Let’s learn to swim programme, and other sports programmes such as Krpan and Hura, prosti čas (Hurray for Free Time). Their aim is to acquaint children with different sports activities and for them to live as actively as possible.

Sports programmes and the total number of children involved in the years 2014–2021:

Sports programme	Number included
Mali sonček (Little Sunshine)	313,165
Zlati sonček (Golden Sunshine)	211,939
Krpan (Krpan)	154,550
Naučimo se plavati (Let’s learn how to swim)	213,372
Ciciban planinec (Ciciban the Hiker)	19,130
Mladi planinec (Young Mountain Walker)	11,111
Hura, prosti čas (Hurray for Free Time)	11,416
Športna tekmovanja (Sports competitions)	436,190
Zdrav življenjski slog (A Healthy Lifestyle)	155,295

In primary and secondary schools, sport is a compulsory subject. Schools organise sports days with different themes, and pupils can engage in various extracurricular activities that cover a wide range of individual and team sports.

As part of the learning process, Slovenian schoolchildren may attend various optional sports subjects or the ‘school in nature week’, in which they can try sports such as skiing, swimming and hiking. This is why we say it is no coincidence that we are successful in professional sports.

As young people grow up with sport, schoolchildren also actively participate in various sports competitions. According to statistics from the Planica National Institute of Sport, over 90,000 Slovenian primary and secondary school pupils participate in such

MONITORING OF PHYSICAL FITNESS AND SLOFIT



In Slovenian schools each pupil receives an average of 4.46 teaching hours of physical education per week.

Ever since 1987 we have been monitoring the physical fitness and motor development of children and teenagers in Slovenia who attend primary and secondary schools as part of the Sports Education Card programme (SEC). The project – which began with real cards – is now a modern programme supported by the web application Moj SLOfit, which makes life-long monitoring of physical fitness and other connected data accessible to all.

The SLOfit system consists of the SEC measurement tasks, measurement tasks for adults, questionnaires on movement habits and details of parent, the SLOfit database and reporting systems for individuals and primary schools. The SLOfit database is now the largest database on the physical fitness of children in the world, as it contains medical data of more than 40 birth cohorts of children who were monitored by the programme continuously for approximately 13 years.

All individuals may access their test data via the My SLOfit application. In addition to promoting active participation in sports, the application also encourages people to drop unhealthy habits and avoid certain conditions, such as smoking and obesity. They can share their SLOfit data with health and physical exercise experts, allowing them to improve their quality of life by undertaking structured physical exercise.



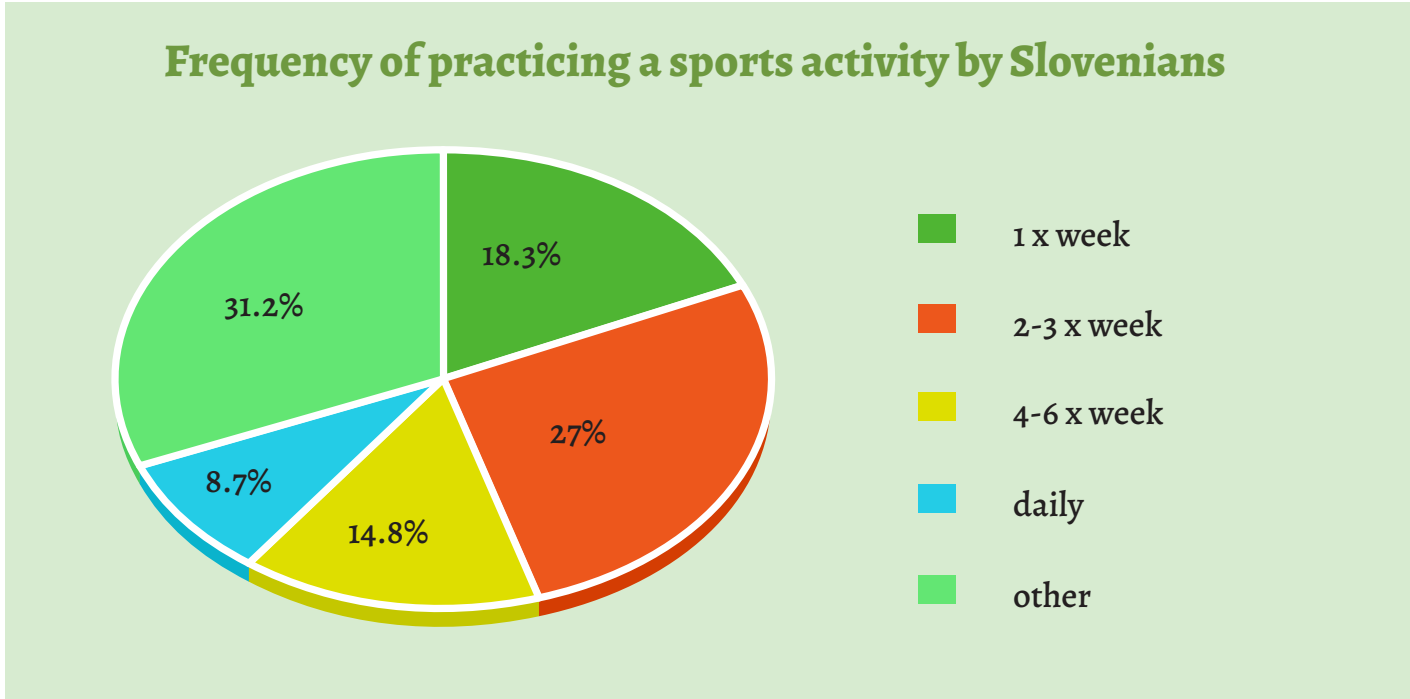
More than one million Slovenians – half the entire population – have undergone testing as part of the SLOfit project in the past 30 years.



SLOfit testing in a primary school. Photo: Faculty of Sport archives

DEDICATION TO SPORT FOR ALL

It is important, however, that everyone finds the right form of activity for themselves. In Slovenia everything is close at hand – nature, well-developed public infrastructure and numerous sports facilities – allowing us to remain involved in sport and recreation throughout our lives. Six out of ten Slovenians spend more than two and a half hours each week engaging in recreational sports activities – in line with WHO recommendations. Four out of ten spend more than five hours per week doing some kind of sporting activity.



We are active international promoters of a healthy lifestyle and life-long physical activity, which we emphasised in particular during our Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in the second half of 2021. We are aware that a physically active society is a healthier society, so we earmark funds for both professional and also recreational sport.

One of the greatest achievements of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union was the formation of the European Sports Model, which is intended to provide appropriate conditions for the whole population to participate in sports activities. It is based on European values such as solidarity, open competitions, fair play, mutual respect and integrity, and emphasises the importance of organised sport in the EU having common features.

Many examples of good practice in Europe are also evident in Slovenia: structured organisation of sport in nurseries, schools, clubs, associations and sports federations; emphasis on the importance of local communities from the point of view of public infrastructure and the promotion of local communities by successful athletes; providing health insurance for athletes; and the financial solidarity of the international umbrella federation with national associations and clubs.

As we are aware that we do not all have equal opportunities for active participation in sports, we also devote much attention to making sport accessible to persons with reduced mobility in Slovenia. This is the aim of the project entitled Active, healthy and satisfied, which aims to encourage disabled persons of all ages to participate in sports, and to train professional staff to work in this field.

SLOVENIA – A POPULAR SPORTS TOURISM DESTINATION

Despite covering a relatively small area of just over 20,000 km², Slovenia has a wide variety of landscapes and an extremely varied topography. From the plains of Prekmurje, wine-growing hills, unspoiled forests, Alpine valleys and snow-covered mountains, to the limestone caves, crystal-clear rivers, breath-taking waterfalls and intermittent lakes.

And it is precisely due to its small size that Slovenia can boast of the very small distances between these very different landscapes. It is only a two-hour drive from the coast, where you can swim in the Adriatic Sea, to the snow-covered slopes of the Julian Alps, down which you can ski.

The diversity of Slovenia's nature has also contributed to the development of different ecosystems and incredible biodiversity. Our territory is home to over 15,000 different animal species – 850 of which are endemic, and thus mostly live only in Slovenia.



Piran – view of the Julian Alps from the Slovenian coast.
Photo: Jošt Gantar/www.slovenia.info

Slovenia offers a wide range of natural, historical and cultural attractions, a wealth of tradition, diverse culinary experiences, and a growing range of sports, cultural and other activities.

In fact, the whole of Slovenia can be seen as one large sports venue, and this is why we welcome increasing numbers of visitors each year, who prefer green, active and healthy experiences. Tourism and sports tourism first developed in those parts of Slovenia that have many different natural resources – sunshine, thermal and sea water, clean air, unspoiled nature, and a climate favourable for different sports.

Sports tourism is linked to both recreational and professional sport. An important part of sports tourism is sport for young people and children. This involves organising various retreats, ‘school in nature weeks’, multi-day training sessions, and so on.

SLOVENIA – A POPULAR SPORTS TOURISM DESTINATION

It is also interesting how Slovenia’s top athletes organise their own training camps for promising young athletes. For example, Anže Kopitar and Goran Dragič prepare annual camps that are attended by children from all over the world.



View of Lake Bled.
Photo: Michael Matti/www.slovenia.info



A view of Plečnik’s marketplace by the River Ljubljanica.
Photo: Miran Kambič/www.slovenia.info



Anže Kopitar’s camp for junior ice hockey players at Bled. Photo: Matej Mišič

THE NATIONAL I FEEL SLOVENIA TRADEMARK



I feel Slovenia exhibition in London. Photo: STA

Slovenia presents itself abroad with the national I FEEL SLOVENIA trademark. Its visual appearance is based on the colour green, which represents Slovenia’s forests. These cover more than half our country’s surface area and put us in third position on the list of the most forested European countries.

The green I FEEL SLOVENIA trademark reflects our balanced lifestyle, characterised by perseverance and self-confidence, which push us to realise our personal goals every day, and the shared vision of sustainable development, which will preserve our country’s natural, cultural and historical features for many generations to come.

The Slovenian green speaks of the harmony of all the senses with which we can experience different parts of the country. This is why we never remember Slovenia just for what we have seen, but our memory of the country is a combination of its picturesque landscapes, the smell of the forests and the clean Alpine air, the babbling of brooks and rivers, and the tastes of our traditional cuisine. You don’t just visit Slovenia, you feel it.



WHY IS SLOVENIA SO GOOD AT SPORTS?

- Because its small, diverse, and offers so many different outdoor activities. The share of people living in the urban and rural areas is approximately 50:50, and the towns and cities are small. So most people have nature on their doorstep.
- Slovenia is one of the OECD countries with the lowest income inequality, which means most people can afford to engage in recreational sport.
- Slovenia has well-developed sports infrastructure, and most school gyms are also used for recreational sport. Although most activities are not free of charge, they are often subsidised by local communities. Many local sports clubs rely on volunteers.
- The development of physical activities and sports is carried out following a strategic approach and scientific basis.

WHY IS IT NO COINCIDENCE THAT SLOVENIA IS AMONG THE WORLD'S BEST AT SPORTS ACHIEVEMENTS?

- The whole system of public interest in physical activity and sport establishes a framework in which the civil sports domain can best develop.
- The system of sports education, physical activity and sport is integrated in the national education system.
- This system ensures every school has a gym or sports hall, while sports education is present in all primary and secondary schools.
- Public funds are provided systemically from two sources: the state budget and the lottery.
- The system functions on a national and local level in the spirit of good cooperation with the civil sports domain, which functions on the basis of voluntary association and is autonomous.
- Each individual at every level of the education system, from pre-school to university, is included. This is why Slovenia has such success, despite having only two million inhabitants.
- It is through public interest that the state provides systemic assistance in the development of sport on a competitive and professional level through various government departments or civil sports domains (see more details in the attachment).
- The state cooperates well with the civil sports domain.
- The Slovenian nation's soul and tradition are dedicated to sport, and it is aware of its benefits for the individual and society with regard to health, learning, social cohesion, and more.

AND SOME ADDITIONAL FIGURES

1. In 2017, almost 40% of Slovenia's inhabitants spent at least five hours a week engaging in sports activities. Only six other members of the EU-28 spent more hours per week on sports. The share of those who spent a sufficient amount of time per week engaging in recreational physical activity (according to WHO recommendations at least 150 minutes per week), was 61%.
2. The proportion of inhabitants who spent at least five hours a week on sport in 2017 was highest in the Central Slovenia statistical region (47%), and lowest in Posavje and Koroška (29%).
3. We also take time for sport and recreation while on holiday. In 2020, Slovenians on holiday in Slovenia spent €84.5 million on sports, recreation, and visiting sports events, and €7.9 million abroad.
4. In 2018, households spent an average of €228 (EUR 92 per household member) on recreation and sports, i.e. 1.1% of all their expenditures in one year. That's more than in 2000, when households spent 0.8% of their budgets on recreation and sports.
5. In 2018, households spent an average of €64 (€26 per household member) on equipment for sport, camping and recreation, i.e. 0.3% of all their expenditures in one year. However, this percentage was higher in 2000, when households spent 0.4% of their budgets on such equipment.
6. At the end of 2021 there were 739 professional athletes in Slovenia (676 men and 63 women), and 1,705 coaches, umpires and other official staff.
7. In 2021, Slovenia imported €76.6 million worth of equipment for general physical wellbeing, exercise, athletics and other sports (e.g. skis, golf equipment, tennis rackets, surf boards, skates and roller-skates, etc). The value of exports in this sector was even greater, at €78.3 million. The import of these products in 2021 was 119% higher than 10 years previously (2011), while exports grew by 61% over the same period.
8. The average cost of going to a gym, including the registration fee and the possibility of going there throughout the day, was €57 in 2021.
9. Some Slovenians even have surnames that come from the world of sport, e.g. Kolesar (Cyclist) (five people in Slovenia), Lopar (Racket) (five) and Tekmec (Rival) (25).
10. The average height of the men's volleyball team members is 198 cm – exactly 20 cm more than the average height of Slovenian men.

Source: SURS



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