



PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN

## The sporting country

Sport is more popular in Liechtenstein than hardly anywhere else. Over 15,000 of the 35,000 inhabitants are members of a sport association or club. Taking multiple memberships into account, more than one third of the population belongs to a sport club. Every 230th serves as president of a sport association. Again and again, the country is good for surprises – not just because of its diverse offerings in popular sport, but also because of its top results internationally.



LIECHTENSTEIN

The sport history of the country began in the late 19th century. The first known report of sporting activities concerned shooting, around 1800. Swiss border guards triggered the skiing boom after 1924. Skiing in Malbun – the only ski resort in Liechtenstein – is still at the very top of Liechtenstein inhabitants' private moments of joy.

## First Olympic participation in 1936

Baron Eduard von Falz-Fein was the first Liechtenstein athlete to compete on the Olympic stage in 1936. Since then, participating in the Olympics and Paralympics has been a tradition for athletes from the small state. The size of the delegations has ranged from 13 (1988 Winter Games in Calgary) to one active athlete (2004 Summer Games in Athens). Most athletes have qualified for the Winter Games in alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, and bobsleigh. In the Summer Games, Liechtenstein competes for Olympic glory in athletics, judo, cycling, and shooting. The successful skiers have so far won nine Olympic medals for Liechtenstein.

The Ski Museum in Vaduz tells not only these stories. The Ski Museum, which has been officially recognized by FIS, the International Ski Federation, since 2005, shows the development of Alpine skiing from its origins to today:

from wooden skis made of staves to the ultramodern top skis of the world elite. With this collection, the Ski Museum is one of the largest winter sport collections in the world.

## Sport as an image bearer

The Liechtenstein Olympic Sports Federation (LOSV) is the umbrella federation of Liechtenstein sport, supporting and advising the activities and developments of sport associations and organizations. The country's sport structure developed in 1992 from the merger of the FLSV (Princely Liechtenstein Sports Federation), the LOK (Liechtenstein Olympic Committee), and the SLSH (Liechtenstein Sport Promotion Foundation).

## Sport teaches values

Sport in Liechtenstein is diverse. Sport can be pursued in 41 sport associations with over 120 member clubs – from swimming to unihockey and climbing. Entry into these sports is facilitated through taster courses for everyone and presentations at the Fit'n'Fun Day of the LOSV, hosted every two years.

The LOSV and its associations offer a social environment and the necessary personal support and objectives that make it worthwhile to invest one's



Liechtenstein's nature invites you and soccer is one of the most popular sports

own efforts. The associations are a place of cohesion, where generations can be active together. Young people learn the values of bonds, common spirit, and active participation. They also learn discipline, fairness, and compliance with rules, as well as the ability to lose.

## The state promotes ambition and talent

The Government energetically supports these efforts. With the entry into force of the Sports Act on 1 April 2000, the Government created the Sports Commission to promote and coordinate sport in Liechtenstein. Elite athletes benefit from sport promotion, and popular sports benefit from the Sports Commission's assumption of costs to train Youth+Sport coaches and the nearly free use of sport facilities.

Young sport talents have been promoted in a targeted manner in the Liechtenstein Sports School since

2004. By reducing the hours of class instruction, sport students can train intensively from Tuesday afternoon to Friday afternoon. To make up for class instruction that they miss during training and competition, they receive tutoring and supplemental instruction. In return, they are required to train vigorously and renounce alcohol, nicotine, narcotics, and doping.

The Sports School is also open to students from Switzerland and Austria. Each sport association organizes the appropriate training. In its efforts to combat drug abuse, Liechtenstein can count on the partnership of Swiss Olympic. Also in other areas, cooperation with Switzerland is close, providing athletes with optimal support in diagnostics, training, and events. Most associations take part in the Swiss championships, which is appreciated equally by athletes and functionaries.

## Football is number 1

The largest associations in the country are those of the classical sports, such

as football, skiing, and tennis. The Liechtenstein Football Association (LFV), as the largest association in the country, has seven clubs with a total of 2,700 members. 1,200 of these are licensed footballers. After its founding in 1934, 1974 was a milestone in the LFV's history: LFV was accepted as the 142th member of FIFA, the international football federation, and as the 34th member of UEFA, the European football federation. The first official international match took place on 9 March 1982 in Balzers against Liechtenstein's neighbor Switzerland (0:1 loss). The 2006 World Cup qualifying games were the greatest success of the Liechtenstein national team so far. Liechtenstein beat Luxembourg twice (3:0 and 4:0) and tied Portugal (2:2) and Slovakia (0:0). The LFV values the promotion of young players particularly highly. With the U15 and U21 selections in elite football and the U14 and U13 teams in competitive football, young players enjoy excellent training. An annual highlight is the Cup Final, the winners of which can later compete to qualify for the UEFA Cup. In club championships, the Vaduz football club plays in the Challenge League, the second-highest league in Switzerland.

This privilege required a special solution in 2004, however, when FC Vaduz – which was playing in the Challenge League – prepared itself to advance to

the Swiss Super League. In the event that FC Vaduz should win the crown and a Liechtenstein team would therefore represent Switzerland in the European Cup, the countries found a friendly neighborly solution: If FC Vaduz should become Swiss champion, the Swiss runner-up would play in the European competitions.

## Skiing: the national sport

About 2,500 ski enthusiasts are members of the Liechtenstein Ski Association, to which eight clubs belong. Liechtenstein still remembers the World Championship titles of Hanni (1974) and Andi Wenzel (1978) and the double Olympic victory of Hanni Wenzel in Lake Placid 1980. Since 1988, Liechtenstein skiers have returned home empty-handed from major events, but

Ski champion Marco Büchel has already won many medals for Liechtenstein



Marco Büchel (runner-up at the World Championship in Vail/Beaver Creek, USA, in 1999; winner of the downhill race in Val Gardena in 2005) and cross-country skiers Markus Hasler and Stephan Kunz have made headlines as part of the world elite in the recent past. So far, Liechtenstein has won 57 times in the history of the Ski World Cup.

Ranked third behind football and skiing is tennis. The Tennis Association has two youth coaches responsible for the elite athletes. The goal of the association is to participate in international events such as the Fed Cup and the Davis Cup. At the club level, 40 teams in seven clubs compete in the inter-club championships in May and June.

## Model aerobatics, martial arts, and bobsledding

Liechtenstein has also made a name for itself in lesser-known sports. For years, Oliver Geissmann has competed as an air rifle shooter on the international stage.

Liechtenstein is a leading model aerobatics nation. Over 40 years and three generations, the Matt family has repeatedly supplied world and European champions. Wolfgang Matt has already won 300 international competitions, twice as world champion and five times as European champion. He has passed



Liechtenstein is a leading model aerobatics nation (here Wolfgang Matt)

his talent on to his son Roland, who not only amazed everyone by using smoke cartridges for the first time in the history of model aerobatics at the Tournament of Champions, but has also taken home world championship and European championship medals.

Liechtenstein is the home of both the youth world champion in kickboxing, Metin Kayar, and of the senior world champion, Martin Kaiser – the pioneer of kickboxing in Liechtenstein. Winter triathlete Marc Ruhe has also brought home a world champion title, and he won the overall World Cup in 2002.

Wolfgang Schädler, a former world-class bobsledder, led the American bobsledding national team from nothing into the world elite as its coach. The native of Triesenberg also constructed the famous Schädler sled for the international bobsledding elite: a high-tech racing sled with sophisticated functionality and an appealing design.

Cycling world star Roman Hermann launched a cycling craze in Liechtenstein in the 1980's. In 1982, the specialist on the 6-days racetrack won bronze in the points race at the World Championship in Leicester, England. Since Roman Hermann ended his sporting career ten years ago, he has served as athletic director of the Stuttgart Six Days.

Team sports are also always making headlines at the highest level. The Squash Rackets Club Vaduz won the Swiss championship in 2004, and the volleyball players of Galina Schaan played in Swiss National League A for two years.

## Special Olympics

Special Olympics Liechtenstein (SOLie) began in 1999 with training opportunities in swimming and cross-country. Meanwhile, further sports have been added, and the Liechtenstein delega-

tion travels to the world competitions every two years, from which it returns with many golden experiences and performances.

## LIE Games

Despite the small size of the country and its associations, Liechtenstein repeatedly organizes large events. Through the LGT Marathon, cycling events in Ruggell and Mauren, the U19 Football European Championship, international volleyball tournaments, international competitions in cross-country skiing, alpine skiing, model aerobatics, and international football matches, the name of Liechtenstein is carried out into the world. In 2011, Liechtenstein will – for the second time, after 1999 – serve as organizer of the Games of the Small States of Europe

International Alpine  
marathon in Liechtenstein







Young talent in Alpine skiing  
Tina Weirather

and therefore also as host of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The Games of the Small States of Europe were founded by the IOC in 1985 and serve as a springboard for the Olympic Games. Every two years, athletes from the small states of Iceland, Cyprus, Luxembourg, San Marino, Malta, Monaco, Andorra, and Liechtenstein compete for medals.

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## Close contacts with the IOC

Like her father Franz Josef before her, Princess Nora has supported popular sport in the country and elite sport at the IOC for over 20 years. Princess Nora is particularly engaged on behalf of small states and is a member of the IOC commission on Women and Sport, in which she helps strengthen the position of women in sports. Peter Ritter, co-founder of Olympic Solidarity, has also been a pathfinder. The initiative of sport functionaries has opened doors for the small country of Liechtenstein.

Sport in Liechtenstein exhibits the same facets as in most countries on earth. Particularly striking, however, is the level of enthusiasm, the diversity, the density, and the successes, measured against the small size of the country.