

# Sport

Number of national federations and associations:	69
Number of sports societies and clubs:	3,500
Number of members of sports societies and clubs:	400,000
Number of top level and competition class sportsmen and women:	88,000

*Source: Ministry of Education and Sport, the Olympic Committee of Slovenia*

## Enthusiasm for activity

### Every third Slovene regularly takes part in active leisure pursuits

Records and medals at the most important world competitions, the conquering of the so-far unclimbed south wall of Daulaghiri in the Himalayas, the Slovenian football team qualifying for the first time for the European Championship in 2000 and World Cup in 2002 and the Slovenian handball team for the Olympic Games in Sydney, all filled Slovenian sports enthusiasts with joy at the turn of the millennium. There are nearly 400,000 registered members of almost 3,500 sports societies and clubs, which are joined into 69 national federations. 265,000 members regularly take part in their chosen sports activity, nearly a third of adult Slovenes take part in some sort of active leisure pursuit at least once a week. In Slovenia, there are 88,000 registered sportsmen and women at the top or competition level, among them more than 2,500 are categorised as top-level or promising sportsmen and women.

## In the falcon's footsteps

### The beginnings of organised exercise in Slovenia

As early as the Middle Ages, people living on the territory now embraced by Slovenia took part in activities similar to sport. The first Slovenian encyclopaedia writings (*Slava Vojvodine Kranjske*,

1689) describe boating, cave exploration, fishing, hunting, mountain climbing, shooting and skiing. The 17<sup>th</sup> century description of a skier from Bloke is the oldest written record of skiing in Central Europe.

In spite of this documented early existence of sport, Slovenian sports societies did not appear until nearly two hundred years later - the first Slovenian sports association *Južni sokol* (The Southern Falcon) was founded in

1862, as a response to the German *Turnverein*, founded a year earlier. In 1905 the *Slovenska sokolska zveza* (The Slovenian Falcon League) appeared, uniting 115 societies. Around this time numerous other societies were formed: between 1872 and 1920, mountaineers, cyclists and students joined, the latter organising their Slovenian sports societies at universities. Between the First and the Second World Wars the first professional sports leagues were formed and for a while there was also a Slovenian sub-committee of the Yugoslav Olympic Committee.

After the Second World War, the *Fizkulturalna zveza* (The Physical Culture Association) was set up, which later became the *Športna zveza Slovenije* (The Sports Association of Slovenia), with the later addition of an association for physical education called *Partizan*. In the seventies and eighties, there were special physical culture associations, responsible for financing sports activities. At this time, more than 2005 gymnasiums were built as well as a number of other sports facilities. In 1991, the Slovenian



In 2005, at the Planica giant ski jump, the Norwegian Bjørn Einar Romøren jumped 239 metres, setting a new world ski jump record.

Olympic Committee was founded, which was recognised a year later by the International Olympic Committee.

Slovenian competitors took part under the Slovenian flag for the first time at the Olympic Games in Albertville in 1992.

### **The national programme**

#### **From physical education to top-level sport**

The organisation of sports activities in Slovenia is based on the activities of sports associations, societies and clubs, which can function freely according to the principle of the freedom of association. The state is creating suitable conditions for the development of sport via the National Sports Programme, which was adopted by the parliament and which determines short-term, mid-term and long-term goals. The programme determines that sports activities are in the public interest and it covers the overall organisation of physical education, recreation, high-quality sports, top-level sports and sports activities for the disabled.

The Ministry of Education and Sport financially supports sports activities in all areas. In addition, it is also responsible for school sports programmes and for educating professional sports personnel to work in sports organisations and in education.

### **Winning disciplines**

#### **From floor exercises to the highest peaks**

Slovenian sportsmen and women are very successful at international level. So far, they have won 55 Olympic medals, and more than 360 world championship medals. At the Olympic Games in Sydney, they won two gold medals. Slovenia thus achieved a very high fifth place according to the number of medals won in relation to population size. The best results are gained in skiing, athletics, ski jumping, gymnastics, rowing and white-water canoeing. In team sports, too, Slovenian clubs and teams hold their own at all international competitions. The best results have been achieved in basketball, volleyball, handball and football.

The Slovenian football team qualified for the European Championship in 2000 and for the 2002 World Cup. The Slovenian handball team won a silver medal at the 2004 European Championship in Ljubljana and also qualified for the Olympic Games in Athens and the Slovenian national hockey team has been playing for the second year in a row in the world group A among the best selections of the world. Alpinists occupy a special place in Slovenian sport. Their achievements at the extremes of human endurance, among which are the first ascents of some of the most difficult faces in the Himalayas and other mountain ranges, are not a coin-

cidence. Mountaineering and Alpinism have a very long tradition in Slovenia, and mountaineering is also one of the most popular forms of recreation. In November 1999, Tomaž Humar in a solo ascent climbed the South face of Daulaghiri.

Among the greatest achievements in extreme sports we should mention the skier Davo Karničar, who was the first in the world to ski down the world's highest mountain, Mt. Everest, in October 2000.

### Achievements worthy of national pride The most important Slovenian athletes

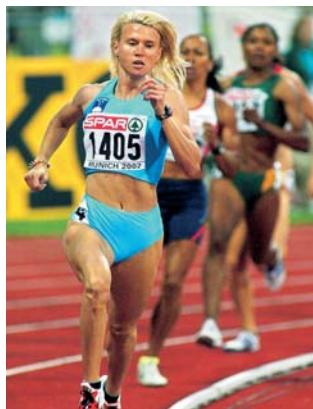
Even under Austro-Hungarian rule, the Slovenian people took part in international games and started competing at the Olympic Games in 1912. As a member of the then Austro-Hungarian team, the Slovene, Rudolf Cvetko, won a silver medal in fencing. The first great achievements in the history of world sports accomplished by Slovenian sportsmen and women were mainly in gymnastics, as Slovenian gymnasts were before the Second World War among the best in the world. Particularly famous was Leon Štukelj who, between 1922 and 1936, won eight gold, four silver and five bronze medals in three Olympic games and three world championships.

After the Second World War, the reputation of Slovenian gymnastics was carried forward by Miro Cerar, with two gold medals and one bronze medal at the Olympic Games in Tokyo and Ciudad de Mexico. He was also among the best at the world championships in Moscow in 1958, Prague in 1962, Dortmund in 1966 and Ljubljana in 1970. In the recent time the gymnasts Aljaž Pegan and Mitja Petkovšek have received international recognition. In November 2005 they became world champions in Australia - Aljaž Pegan on high bar and Mitja Petkovšek on parallel bars.

In the last twenty years it is skiers who have achieved the best results. Ever since Bojan Kržaj won 4<sup>th</sup> place in the giant slalom at the Olympic Games in Lake Placid in 1980, Boris Strel, Jure Franko, Mateja Svet, Jure Košir, Katja Koren, Alenka Dovžan, Nataša Bokal, Urška Hrovat and Špela Pretnar have all stood on the winning podiums at major competitions (world cups, world championships and the Olympic Games). Špela Pretnar was the slalom World Cup winner in the 1999/2000 seasons.

Slovenian ski jumpers are also very successful. Matjaž Debelak won a bronze medal on the 90-metre ski jump at the Olympic Games in Calgary. The second medal in Calgary - the silver one- was won by the Slovenes in team ski jumping. In 1991 Franci Petek became the world champion on the 90-metre ski jump in Predazzo and Primož Peterka won the World Cup in the 1996/1997 and 1997/1998 seasons. At the 2005 Nordic Ski World Championship in Oberstdorf,

*Jolanda Čeplak, the 800m indoor world record holder, European champion and Athens Olympics bronze medallist in the 800 metres.*



Germany, the 18-year-old Rok Benkovič won his first gold medal. In the eighties and nineties, Slovenian scullers won medals at world championships and Olympic Games. At the Olympic Games in Seoul, the bronze medal for the coxless double scull was won by Sadik Mujkič and Bojan Prešeren. Three years later, Iztok Čop and Denis Žvegelj won a silver medal at the world championship in Vienna, plus a bronze medal at the 1992 Olympic

Games in Barcelona. The same year, a bronze medal for the four-man scull was won by Sadik Mujkič, Milan Janša, Janez Klemenčič and Sašo Mirjanič. Iztok Čop won a further three medals at the world championships. In Indianapolis in 1994, he won a bronze in the single sculls, a year later he won at the world championship in Tampere, and in 1999 at St. Catherine's, he became the world champion in the double sculls, together with Luka Špik.

The 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta were also very successful for Slovenian sportsmen and women. The athlete Brigita Bukovec missed gold only by a hundredth of a second in the 100 metres hurdles. Her success was supplemented by Andraž Vehovar with a silver medal in white-water canoeing (K-1 slalom). Three years later, Gregor Cankar was among the best athletes at the world championship in Seville, winning a bronze medal in the long jump.

At the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Slovenian sportsmen won 4 Olympic medals - one silver and three bronze: rowers Iztok Čop and Luka Špik, the gold medallists from Sydney, won a silver medal in the men's double sculls, the athlete Jolanda Čeplak, the world indoor record holder in the women's 800 metres, won a bronze medal in this event, the judoka Urška Žolnir won a bronze medal in the under 63 kg category and Vasilij Žbogar, the 2003 European champion, won a bronze medal in the laser sailing competition.

The successes of Slovenian sportsmen and women are supplemented by those working in sports organisation, who are considered to be excellent organisers of world competitions. The Vitranc Cup in Kranjska gora and the Zlata Lisica Cup on the Pohorje are included in the World Cup skiing programme. The annual final competition of the ski-jumping World Cup takes place at Planica, on the largest natural ski-jump in the world.

#### Information

[www.mss.gov.si](http://www.mss.gov.si)  
(Ministry of Education and Sport)

[www.olympic.si](http://www.olympic.si)  
(Olympic Committee of Slovenia)

[www.nzs.si](http://www.nzs.si)  
(Football Association of Slovenia)

[www.slovenia.ski.net](http://www.slovenia.ski.net)  
(Skiing Association of Slovenia)

