

NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
AUSTRIA

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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

The Federal State primarily exercises a competence to fund sport, which is based on Article 17 of the Constitution. Since January 1, 2018, the legal base for funding sport by the Federal State is the “Bundes-Sportförderungsgesetz 2017” and the “Glücksspielgesetz” (“Federal Gambling Act”) in its current version. In Austria, on the one hand, state institutions are responsible for sport, which operate on federal and provincial level, and on the other hand there are important non-governmental organisations, such as Sport Austria (the national umbrella organisation for organized sports), federations or clubs.

At the federal level, the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport, the Federal Ministry of Defence, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research are primarily responsible for the various areas of sport. In addition, individual sport-specific areas may also fall into the competence of other federal ministries.

According to Article 15 of the Constitution, sport is a competence of the regions. Nine regional directors for sport have also been established.

The “Bundes-Sportförderungsgesetz 2017” established the Bundes-Sport GmbH (BSG) as a funding agency, owned by the Federal State. The tasks of this agency include the distribution, controlling and monitoring of funding according to the law, the processing of other funding in the field of sport, funding for the preparation and implementation of major sports events of international importance (Olympic and Paralympic Games, Special Olympics World Games, World Cup and European Championships as well as sports events of general importance for Austria), the promotion of sport for women, girls and disadvantaged groups, the promotion of sporting science-projects and the promotion of top-level sport and the inclusion of people with disabilities in sport.¹

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

In Austria, in addition to the structural framework (see 1), the principle of autonomy of the federations and associations is valid.

A national strategy in the field of sports diplomacy does not exist.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

Due to the national specifics described above, Austria carries on diplomatic activities in the framework of bilateral and international cooperation. Until now, despite its engagement in international bodies or within the course of international conventions, Austria has further tried to contribute to international understanding and the promotion of social and cultural values by

¹Struktur und Organisation: Sport Austria. 2022. Start: Sport Austria. <https://www.sportaustria.at/de/sport-in-oesterreich-und-europa/sport-in-oesterreich/struktur-und-organisation/>, (accessed December 28, 2022).

organising major international sporting events. As a nation specialized in winter sports, Austria has held numerous Alpine and Nordic World Championships. Innsbruck, the capital of the federal province Tyrol, has hosted the Winter Olympics twice, in 1964 and 1976, and in 2012, the Winter Youth Olympic Games (YOG). While the Games in 1964 were above all a project to support the economic and political reconstruction of Austria after the Second World War and to contribute to the identification of the population with the re-established neutral Republic of Austria; the Winter Olympics in 1976 were intended as a “bridge builder” between the two geopolitical blocs during the Cold War.²

Another major sports event was held in Austria 2008: on the occasion of the EURO 2008, which was organised together with Switzerland and Austria, Austria’s 81 embassies, six permanent representations to international organisations, two branch offices of embassies and 15 consulates general were further commissioned to act as “embassies of passion” for the EURO 2008 around the world.³

In 2025, the Alpine World Ski Championships will take place in Saalbach/Salzburg, where certain values such as the important topic of sustainability in the field of sport will be emphasised.⁴

Austria supports initiatives related to sport and human rights in multilateral bodies such as the UN Human Rights Council⁵ and the UN General Assembly. This includes the support of resolutions and initiatives connected with sport-events to promote human rights. At the same time, Austria strives to ensure that the need to respect human rights is adequately considered in the organisation of sporting events itself. In 2022 Austria made a financial contribution to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for projects related to combat antisemitism through sport.

Austria’s accession to the Advisory Board of the Centre for Sports and Human Rights and its permanent participation in the Working Group on Sport and Human Rights⁶ were also sport-diplomatic activities to emphasize the topic of human rights together with other countries. The Working Group on Sport and Human Rights has worked together with stakeholders in organised sport in Austria since 2015 in order to address human rights challenges and potentials in sport. In this working group the participants exchange ideas and share experiences and best practice examples.

Building on Austria’s extensive experience as an organiser for sporting events, the Federal Ministry responsible for sport published the handbook “International Sporting Events & Human Rights” in 2021. This handbook addresses sport-federations, organising committees of sports events with an international dimension (including cities, municipalities, and regions) as well as companies, sponsors and the media.⁷

²Siehe “Die Olympischen Winterspiele 1964 und 1976 in Innsbruck im Vergleich”; Schober, Hannes, Graz, 2016

³Österreichische Diplomaten: “Botschafter der Leidenschaft” für die EURO 2008. OTS at: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20070906_OTS0009/oesterreichische-diplomaten-botschafter-der-leidenschaft-fuer-die-euro-2008 (accessed January 11, 2023).

⁴Saalbach 2025. Skicircus Saalbach Hinterglemm Leogang Fieberbrunn. <https://www.saalbach.com/de/saalbach2025/Saalbach2025> (accessed January 11, 2023).

⁵Österreich im VN-Menschenrechtsrat. Startseite – BMEIA, Außenministerium Österreich. <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/themen/menschenrechte/oesterreich-im-vn-menschenrechtsrat/> (accessed January 11, 2023).

⁶<https://www.sportundmenschenrechte.at/ag-sport-menschenrechte/> (11.01.2023).

⁷Internationale Sportereignisse & Menschenrechte. Fairplay. <https://www.fairplay.or.at/projekte/sport-fuer-entwicklung-und-menschenrechte/internationale-sportereignisse-menschenrechte> (accessed December 28, 2022).

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

Austria was engaged in the “Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group”. In the course of the work in the group, close contacts were also established with the organisation “Peace and Sport”, which is based in Monaco and carries out projects and initiatives together with international sport-federations and NGOs in the field of sport & development cooperation. Symbolically, April 6th became the “International Day of Sport for Development and Peace”. This day, many Austrian sport-organisations and the members of government, responsible for sport, draw attention to projects that use sport achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

At the diplomatic level, Austria promotes cooperation between countries through agreements or memoranda of understanding. Occasionally, bilateral relations are deepened through events.

Examples from the recent past:

- In 2020, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Austria and Japan, a 75-person Japanese martial arts delegation from the Nippon Budokan Foundation visited Austria. Various events and martial arts demonstrations were held.⁸
- In September 2021, a diplomatic “cricket match” of the embassies of cricket-playing countries (Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Africa, UK) took place at the De la Salle sports centre in Vienna. The winner received the “Embassy Cup”.⁹
- The Danube Cup was founded in 1990, shortly after the fall of the Iron Curtain, as a peace-building and cross-border sports project of three countries (Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary). Later, Czechoslovakia was replaced by the successor State Slovakia. The Danube Cup is an annual series of events in the countries mentioned (mainly in the youth sector). Currently, competitions of the following associations are held: Baseball/Softball, Archery, Judo, Modern Pentathlon, and Table Tennis. The country with the most points in total receives the Danube Cup (challenge cup, currently Slovakia). Austria would like to cultivate this tradition and possibly expand it in the future. For the 30th anniversary in 2020, the idea was to expand the range of sports. Promising talks have already taken place with three national karate federations. However, due to the current Covid-19-crisis, plans in this regard have been postponed for the time being (presumed new start: 2023).¹⁰

Another example of sport diplomacy in Austria is its engagement in the sports association CISM (Conseil International du Sport Militaire). CISM is the worldwide international military sport organization dedicated to bring together armed forces personnel from all nations through sports activities, thus enabling the physical training, military readiness and education for the armed forces.¹¹ Motto of the association is “Friendship through Sport”. The aims of CISM are as follows: to develop military sports on a broad basis, to develop friendly relations between the armed forces and member countries, to support the sports technical field, to promote progressive and harmonious development of youth and to contribute to the worldwide efforts for general peace.

⁸<https://www.judo-vienna.at/archive/2272> (accessed January 10, 2023).

⁹*Kricket-Turnier “Embassy Cup” organisiert von der Botschaft Sri Lanka*. Diplomacy&Commerce Austria. <http://diplomacyandcommerce.at/kricket-turnier-embassy-cup-organsiert-von-der-botschaft-sri-lankas-d-eng/> (accessed January 10, 2023).

¹⁰*The Danube Cup*. Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, öffentlichen Dienst und Sport. <https://www.bmkoes.gv.at/en/Topics/sport/the-danube-cup.html>, (accessed January 11, 2023).

¹¹*What is CISM*. CISM - International Military Sports Council, Friendship through Sport! <https://www.milsport.one/cism/what-is-cism>, (accessed January 5, 2023).

These objectives are to be achieved by establishing permanent contacts between the various armed forces, promoting research in the field of physical education, delegating the organisation of the various CISM events to the member countries, promoting or deepening comradeship among military athletes and establishing close cooperation with other international sports organisations. Austria officially joined CISM on 7 July 1958 as the 23rd member country.

A number of CISM events have already taken place in Austria. Most recently, the 45th World Military Parachuting Championship was held in Güssing from 20 to 30 June 2022.¹²

In the police sector, the two unions USPE and USIP are relevant in this context. The Union Sportive des Polices d'Europe (USPE)¹³ and the Union Sportive Internationale des Polices (USIP)¹⁴ are internationally active organisations that organise police sport championships at European and international level and are recognised and supported by the IOC. In addition to promoting police sports, these competitions help to foster contacts between nations and at the same time raise awareness and understanding of different cultures, which ultimately leads to a harmonisation of intercultural cooperation and subsequently to sustainable sport diplomacy.

Austria is a member of both organisations and regularly sends police athletes to participate in competitions. In addition, Austria will host the 15th USPE European Police Championships Alpine Skiing from 6 to 10 March 2023 and implement the common values directly on site. The European Ski Championships will take place in Hinterstoder, Upper Austria.

With regard to gender equality, Austria has been represented by the association "100 % Sport" in the "High Level Group for Gender Equality in Sport", which published new recommendations in 2022.¹⁵

Since the beginning of its activities in September 2021 the project ReFocus Austria¹⁶ has carried out a large number of sport-related events. Sport serves as the basis for exchange between young people, people interested in sport and businesspeople. The focus of activities is on sport areas such as extreme sports and winter sports, due to good infrastructural possibilities. The goals of the events are knowledge transfer between sports and businesspeople, international networking of professional sportsmen and sportswomen and the support of Austrian initiatives on a multilateral level.

Activities in the field of organised sport

From 2019 to 2020, Sport Austria, the national umbrella organisation for organized sports, was a partner in an Erasmus+ funded project, together with the DOSB, Swiss Olympic and the Swedish Riksidrottsförbundet. The aim of the project "Sport for Europe: Strengthening European values through sport values"¹⁷ was to reflect on the role of sports organisations as promoters of values in society and to strengthen their activities. This strengthened the idea to link European values and the values of sport, strengthen sports organisations in their role as organisations acting sustainably and socially responsibly. The project promotes exchange between the participating countries in order to learn from each other and to further develop programmes and projects.

¹² CISM Events in Austria. CISM. <http://www.cism-austria.at/index.html> (accessed January 5, 2023).

¹³ USPE European Police Sports Union - About the USPE. USPE European Police Sports Union. <https://www.uspe.org/ueberuns.php> (accessed January 2, 2023).

¹⁴ About the USIP. USIP. <https://internationalpolicesports.com/about-the-usip/> (accessed January 2, 2023).

¹⁵ Geschlechtergerechtigkeit im Sport - Neuer EU-Aktionsplan - Genderkompetenz im Sport. Genderkompetenz im Sport. <https://genderkompetenz-sport.at/geschlechtergerechtigkeit-im-sport/> (accessed December 28, 2022).

¹⁶ ReFocus Austria. Außenministerium Österreich. <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/european-foreign-policy/foreign-trade/refocus-austria/> (accessed January 11, 2023).

¹⁷ Werte: Sport for Europe: Strengthening European values through sport values. Sport Austria. <https://www.sportaustria.at/de/schwerpunkte/soziales-und-gesellschaftspolitik/good-governance-werte/sport-for-europe/> (accessed December 28, 2022).

The working method in this small cooperation project was the joint exchange among the project partners, the exchange of knowledge and experiences through the network and the member organisations in the four countries. The result was a brochure, and there may be opportunities for further cooperation in the future. The second of four project-meetings took place in Vienna on 28-29 August 2019 and was organised by Sport Austria.

Sport Austria also acts as the national coordinator for the European Week of Sport¹⁸, an initiative of the European Commission. Within the European Week of Sport, socio-political topics – like inclusion, integration, youth empowerment, gender equality – are integrated to bring more awareness to them.

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

In the future, Austria will continue to promote and foster international cooperation in the field of sport, within international organisations as well as in cooperation with the federal regions “Länder” and the organised sport. The EU Work Plan on Sport, the European Sports Charter and, in particular, the SDGs provide orientation in this context. In the course of international events on Austrian soil, the joint efforts around sport diplomacy by politicians, athletes and officials are to be further deepened. A future enrichment within the context of “sport diplomatic” efforts could also be the new Erasmus+ programme, which offers new opportunities for promoting the mobility of sports staff.¹⁹

6. INTERVIEWS

- Members of the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport.

¹⁸European Week of Sport. Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, öffentlichen Dienst und Sport. <https://www.bmkoes.gv.at/en/Topics/sport/european-week-of-sport.html>, (accessed January 11, 2023).

¹⁹Mobility of sport staff. Erasmus+. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-individuals/sport-staff-mobility/mobility-of-sport-staff>, accessed January 11, 2023).



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