

Lucerne 2021 Winter Universiade postponed, will not take place in January 2021

The Lucerne 2021 Winter Universiade will not take place as planned from January 21 to 31, 2021. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the International University Sports Federation (FISU), together with the Organising Committee and Swiss University Sports, has decided to evaluate the possibility of postponement of the event. A potential later date will be discussed over the next two months in consultation with all involved parties, including the international winter sports federations.

“This year has been dramatically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and FISU’s activities too, have been impacted,” said FISU Secretary General-CEO Eric Saintrond. “The 2020 World University Championships and University World Cup 3x3 were cancelled and we have had to adapt and explore online technologies to successfully organise the FISU World Forum and FISU Volunteer Leaders Academy.”

“After several meetings held with the State authorities of Switzerland and the different Cantons involved in hosting Lucerne 2021, we have unanimously agreed that the 30th Winter Universiade cannot be held in January 2021,” added Saintrond. “We are sure this is the right decision in order to ensure the high-level standard of the event and the safety of all participants.”

The Winter Universiade, also known as the FISU World University Games, is the largest winter multisport event after the Winter Olympic Games. The 2021 edition of this unique event was scheduled to take place in Central Switzerland and Lenzerheide from 21 to 31 January 2021.

“After more than four years of preparation it is a painful decision, but in the end an easy one. The health of all the participants has always been the top priority in our evaluations,” said Guido Graf, President of the Organising Committee and Cantonal Councillor of Lucerne.

Global multi-sport event currently not feasible

Decisive factors for the decision were the pandemic situation as well as the present restrictions for entry into Switzerland. Currently, more than 40% of the registered participants are affected by the entry ban into Switzerland, including delegations from the USA, Russia, China and Kazakhstan.

"The Winter Universiade is a world sports event. In addition to the sporting competition, the exchange between the delegations is enormously important to us as an element that brings people together," said FISU President Oleg Matytsin.

"The entry restrictions as well as the implementation of the precautionary measures would have made this exchange impossible", he explained. "We are deeply sorry for this decision, but we are convinced that it is the only right decision in the current situation. We would like to thank the Organising Committee and the National University Sports Federations for their commitment over the past weeks and months."

Swiss University Sports supports the decision. President Mike Kurt said: "Under the current conditions, the Winter Universiade cannot create the expected legacy for Swiss sport and society. In particular, the involvement of the population in the event would be lacking."

Postponement is being evaluated

Together with the Organising Committee and Swiss University Sports, FISU will now examine a possible postponement of the event. Lucerne 2021 Managing Director, Urs Hunkeler explained further: "We will examine various time frames in detail together with all our partners. On the one hand, this evaluation will focus on the timing of the postponement, and on the other hand on the willingness to accompany us during a later event".

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Organising Committee members as well as all our partners for their great commitment and support," he added. "Many have already indicated that they will be part of the event at a later date too. This is a great appreciation and motivation for the evaluations that are now pending."

FISU First Vice President Leonz Eder further stated that, ““This journey started more than five years ago. It is very painful to have to stop this project so close to the finish line, four months before the planned date.”

“I would like to thank all the people in the FISU head office, in the Organising Committee and the Local Organising Committees at venues, who have worked for the Lucerne 2021 Winter Universiade with great passion, competence and enormous commitment. Hopefully it will not be in vain. Because the Winter Universiade is of great importance for Switzerland as well as for Central Switzerland, the Swiss sports system, FISU and Swiss University Sports, all parties involved will do their utmost to seriously consider a postponement and to carefully evaluate various date options.”

The Winter Universiade

The Winter Universiade is the largest winter multisport event after the Winter Olympic Games. The organisation of Lucerne 2021 is a joint project of the six cantons of Central Switzerland: Lucerne, Uri, Schwyz, Obwalden, Nidwalden and Zug, as well as the City of Lucerne. The programme comprises ten sporting disciplines, to be contested at seven competition venues. Students aged between 17 and 25 from more than 540 universities in 50 countries are expected to attend. A total of over 2500 individuals will take part.

The International University Sports Federation – FISU

Founded in 1949, FISU stands for Fédération Internationale du Sport Universitaire (International University Sports Federation). FISU was formed within university institutions in order to promote sports values and sports practice in harmony with the university spirit. Promoting sports values means encouraging friendship, fraternity, fair-play, perseverance, integrity and cooperation amongst students, who one day may have responsibilities and key positions in politics, economy, culture and industry.

All FISU sports events include educational and cultural aspects, bringing together athletes and academia from all over the world to celebrate with a spirit of friendship and sportsmanship. FISU cooperates in developing its events and programmes with all major international sports and educational organisations. As major outcomes of those collaborations, in 2015, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) proclaimed the International Day of University Sport to be celebrated annually on 20 September – an event that has seen huge growth in its first few years.

FISU is composed of 174 Member Associations (National University Sports Federations). The FISU General Assembly elects the members of the FISU Executive Committee, its board of directors. A total of 14 permanent committees advise the Executive Committee in their specialised areas. For the daily administration of FISU, the FISU Executive Committee relies on the Secretary General, who is assisted by the FISU staff. FISU's headquarters are in Lausanne, Switzerland.

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