

To the media

Chur, March 24, 2026

WHEN SPORTS BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER: STRONG START FOR THE 2029 SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD WINTER GAMES

Chur, March 24, 2026. The road to the 2029 Special Olympics World Winter Games Switzerland (2029 World Games) has gained significant momentum. A major milestone was reached with the official signing of the host agreement for the 2029 World Winter Games in Chur. The agreement governs the rights and obligations of all participating partners and marks—three years before the 2029 World Winter Games—the transition into the implementation phase. The visit by Dr. Timothy Shriver brought international attention and political backing at the highest level. At the same time, a representative market research study provides a solid baseline (baseline measurement) for further assessments in the coming years: Inclusion enjoys broad societal support, and where the 2029 World Winter Games are known, their image is excellent. With the relaunch of the website, the digital platform is now also in place: visible, connecting, and forward-looking.

A visit that makes a difference

Meetings at the Federal Council level, exchanges with athletes, and social dialogue at the university: Dr. Timothy Shriver's visit quickly provided important momentum for 2029 World Winter Games Switzerland. As Chairman of Special Olympics International and son of founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver, he lent the project international prestige. His message was unmistakable: The 2029 World Winter Games are more than a sporting event; they are a powerful social statement. In Bern, he was received by two members of the Federal Council: Federal Councilor Elisabeth Baume-Schneider and Federal Councilor Martin Pfister. Also part of the delegation was Susan Wang, a Sargent Shriver Global Messenger and International Athlete Representative for Special Olympics. In her role, Ms. Wang brings the perspective of people with intellectual disabilities into social and political discussions worldwide. In Switzerland, too, she engaged in direct dialogue with representatives from politics and organizations, highlighting the impact that inclusive sports programs can have on the lives of athletes. Through her personal story and her commitment, she exemplifies the power and visibility of the Special Olympics movement.

Federal Councilor Martin Pfister, Head of the Federal Department of Defense, Civil Protection, and Sport: *"I am looking forward to the 2029 Special Olympics World Winter Games. They serve as a platform for athletes with intellectual disabilities and will help make Switzerland an even more inclusive society."*

Federal Councilor Elisabeth Baume-Schneider, Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs (EDI): *"The inclusion of people with disabilities is of great importance to the Federal Council. The Special Olympics World Winter Games Switzerland 2029 offer athletes with intellectual a global stage to showcase their achievements. At the same time, they highlight the core values of inclusion—equality of opportunity, respect, and dignity."*

Dr. Timothy Shriver, Chairman of Special Olympics International, emphasizes:
"With these Games, Switzerland is demonstrating that inclusion is not an abstract idea, but a lived reality."

When we place people with intellectual disabilities at the center of our communities and our lives, we strengthen the cohesion of our entire society.”

Susan Wang, Sargent Shriver Global Messenger, added:

“The World Winter Games in Switzerland are a unique opportunity for athletes from around the world to come together and experience the power of inclusion through sport.”

The encounter with athletes at the Chur Ice Rink—on a playing field similar to where the Special Olympics movement began—made the experience personal and immediate. In Zurich, Dr. Shriver continued the dialogue and spoke at the University of Zurich, in collaboration with the Europa Institute, about human dignity, responsibility, and the power of sport to overcome barriers. The common theme across all stops: the 2029 World Winter Games are not just about competitions—it’s about attitude.

Switzerland is ready

A representative baseline survey on the awareness, perception, and societal anchoring of Special Olympics in Switzerland paints a clear picture: The starting point for the 2029 World Winter Games is strong. Already today, inclusion is understood by a majority of the population as a central societal goal, with high emotional support. Where the Special Olympics World Games are known, they enjoy an excellent image. They stand for credibility, professionalism, and strong values. Trust is already in place; expanding reach is the next task. This is precisely where the potential lies: as awareness grows, so does the social impact. Positive sponsorship effects are also particularly evident. Companies that engage with the Special Olympics community gain measurable levels of goodwill and trust—a strong signal of the platform’s appeal.

The foundation has been laid. Now the goal is to increase visibility, connect people, and firmly anchor inclusion in the public consciousness.

Digital stage: the countdown is on

With the relaunch of its official website, 2029 World Winter Games is also entering the next phase digitally. The platform serves as a central hub for information, engagement, and outreach, making one thing clear: preparations are in full swing and anticipation is growing. An integrated countdown tracks the time until March 10, 2029, and keeps the momentum going. The website brings together news, background information, and stories, puts athletes front and center, and shows step by step how Switzerland is preparing for this major international event.

This fosters not only information but also engagement. Awareness is growing. The movement is gaining visibility—both nationally and internationally. Switzerland2029: More than just the Winter Games.

2029: A shared promise

In March 2029, Switzerland will host the 2029 World Winter Games, sending a strong message of participation, equality, and active inclusion.

What is gaining momentum today will culminate in 2029 in an international event with a lasting impact on sports and society.

Bruno Barth, President of Special Olympics World Winter Games Switzerland 2029:

“Switzerland2029 is an invitation to all of Switzerland to become part of a unique movement. These Games stand for joy, connection, and the courage to live inclusion visibly.”

Media contacts for inquiries:

World Winter Games Switzerland 2029

Sarina Künzli, Head of Communication, sarina.kuenzli@switzerland2029.org, +41 78 818 31 16

2029 World Winter Games

In 2029, Switzerland will welcome the global Special Olympics movement: The 2029 World Winter Games will take place in Switzerland from March 10 to 17, 2029. 3,700 delegation members, including 2,500 athletes and Unified partners, and 900 coaches from more than 100 countries, are expected to attend.

The 2029 World Winter Games are the second-largest winter sports event in the world after the Winter Olympics and represent far more than just athletic competitions. They send a strong message in support of the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and for an inclusive society with equal access to sports, education, health, and all aspects of life.

The opening ceremony will take place on March 10, 2029, at Letzigrund Stadium. The sporting competitions will be held in the canton of Graubünden: alpine skiing and snowboarding in Arosa; figure skating, short track, and floorball in Chur; cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and dance in Lenzerheide. The sporting events will be complemented by the nationwide immersive “Host Town Program,” which actively involves all regions. During the event days, approximately 13,000 people— athletes, coaches, family members, international guests, volunteers, and media representatives—will be on the move.

Special Olympics

Founded in 1968, Special Olympics is a global sports movement to end discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities. We foster acceptance of all people through the power of sport and programming in education, health and leadership. With more than 4.6 million athletes and Unified Sports® partners and over one million coaches and volunteers in more than 200 countries and territories, Special Olympics offers over 30 Olympic-type sports and nearly 60,000 games and competitions every year. Engage with us on: X, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn. Learn more at SpecialOlympics.org.