

The VSS and Its Sport Promotion Programs

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DESCRIPTION

The “Verband der Sportvereine Südtirols” (eng.: Association of South Tyrolean sports clubs) or short VSS was founded in 1970 and now with around 500 member sports clubs, 1,086 sports club sections and around 86,000 members, it is the interest group with the highest number of members in South Tyrol. In the abstract “The VSS and its sport promotion programs” for the online congress on the 4th of December 2020 by the University of Bolzano, we explained the different areas in that the VSS supports the local sports clubs. One major point is the sport promotion programs. The VSS has developed and operates 17 different sport-specific sport promotion programs. Each of these programs focuses on a different sport and they range from football, to volleyball, to swimming and to mountain bike sport. The most popular program is the football promotion program. Through this every year a region-wide championship is organized and held, where around 500 youth, recreational, old Men's and small field teams participate. To promote physical activities there are also sport promotion programs for senior citizens and for people with disabilities that organize different sport events.

The main goal is to pave the way to sport and physical activity for as many children and young people as possible. The focus is on the holistic development of young people and to create an affordable, sport-oriented sports program that has a playful approach and conveys the joy of exercise and sport. The goal with that is to lay the foundation for a lifelong passion for sport and physical activity. For the VSS, sport is education, an important field of learning in which, among other things, the so-called “self-efficacy” can be conveyed to children and young people. By doing sports with other people, important social values such as respect, solidarity, fairness, team spirit, and reliability are taught to the children. Unfortunately, the general pressure to perform in our society does not stop in sports. So, we don't want to hide the fact that the concept of performance and the too-early specialization still influence the promotion of children's sports in a big manner. The VSS tries to counteract this problem with various awareness-raising campaigns to convince the sports clubs to offer children a wide range of sports and exercises in order to expand their competencies and passion

for sports, which is certainly just as beneficial for their later athletic success.

The VSS honors annually sports clubs for their exemplary youth work and the trainer of the year, with the financial support of the South Tyrolean raiffeisen association. The reasoning behind this is that we believe that exemplary work in the sports clubs and from trainers should receive recognition and appreciation and serve as an example for others. For the competition of the “Vorbildliche Jugendarbeit im Sportverein” (eng.: Honorary youth work in sports clubs), meaning the honoring of exemplary youth work, the winners are not chosen based on their athletic results but rather on the educational work of the sports club, that is oriented towards the interests of young people, taking into account their social environment. The same rules follow the competition trainer of the year, which focuses on the trainer as a charismatic figure of integration due to their high level of human, educational, professional competence and their personal commitment, which is usually also reflected in the personal successes of the athletes.

Another goal of the VSS is to advice, support, and helps the sports clubs in their role as a service provider. For example, the VSS organizes training and further education for the sports club members. Education and training have a high priority in the overall direction of the VSS in the conviction that it is always the people with their commitment and their skills who guarantee and advance the development of the sport and its organizations. In recent times this focus on advising and furthering the educational aspect has broadened as many sport events and trainings had to be cancelled or postponed because of the global pandemic. The advisory role of the VSS has also broadened, as we now inform the local sports clubs about the current regulations concerning COVID-19.

The VSS was originally founded with one of the main goals to mediate between the sports clubs and the political sphere. The goal was to strengthen the underrepresented and underfunded German and Ladin speaking South Tyrolean sports clubs. Through the hard work in the beginning of the founding this goal was almost completely achieved. Now with the COVID-19 pandemic the VSS once again assumed his role as a mediator

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and is continuously in touch with the regional government to ensure that the rights of the sports clubs and the right to physical exercise are respected.

The VSS is an entity that supports, advises and funds the sports clubs in South Tyrol and we, as the Association of South Tyrolean sports clubs, will continue to adapt our work to the

given conditions and needs to promote the sport and physical activities. With the financial support of the South Tyrolean Raiffeisen Association, the Raiffeisenkassen and the Province of South Tyrol the VSS will continue to ensure that the German and Ladin speaking sports clubs can continue their jobs as direct provider of sport.