SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
BERLIN 2023

FINAL REPORT

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AKTION MENSCH

READING NOTES

We

When this report is written in the “we” form, “we” refers to the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) leadership team, which represents the entire LOC, as well as the professional structure of Special Olympics Germany and, in particular, the athlete representatives of Special Olympics Germany.

Easy Language

Presenting often complex content in Easy Language has been and continues to be a central aspect of accessibility for many people, especially those with intellectual disabilities. At the LOC, great emphasis was placed on providing all relevant content in Easy Language. There is also an Easy Language version of this final report. Some of the graphics used in this version were created with Easy Language in mind, and are intentionally presented here in that form.

English terminology

This version of the report is a translation from German. As both German and English were the working languages of the LOC, some English terminology has become established over time, in part due to exchange with funding agencies. For this report, terms translated back into German have been returned to their original English form. In some cases, however, there may be slight deviations because the translator did not know the original English term. These terms are explained in the Glossary and List of Abbreviations (page 328).

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DEAR READERS,

On June 17, 2023, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier declared the start of the World Games at the Berlin Olympic Stadium with the words "I now officially open the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023". I had goose bumps because it was a very special moment for me. We had worked for so long for this day, so that these incredible World Games would be ready for all athletes. From the very beginning, athletes were involved in the planning of the World Games, because they should be "Games by Athletes for Athletes." And we succeeded! Athletes were involved in every working group to represent our interests. It was not always easy. Many of them did this work on a voluntary basis in addition to their regular jobs. Because of coronavirus, we had to switch to digital meetings and initially provide many athletes with the necessary technology. But no obstacle could dampen our enthusiasm. We were everywhere: as permanent staff in the World Games Committee, as volunteers in working groups and technical committees, in the Athletes' Roundtable, in English classes, or as hard-working helpers at the World Games. We were able to involve the Athletes' Councils of all 16 Regional Associations, which contributed many great ideas and helped shape the World Games. This was a huge milestone! These were challenging times, but we came together as a team. I would like to thank each and every one of you who contributed to the success of this colossal task!

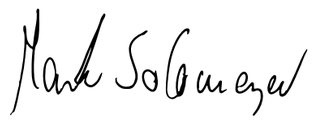
The Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 finally put us athletes in the spotlight where we belong. So many people watched the competitions, cheered for us and followed us. It was very special for us athletes. There was also a lot of media coverage, on television and the Internet, in newspapers and on the radio. During the games, I gave an interview for a German TV channel and also spoke with various celebrities and notable figures such as Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Together with Juliane Rößler and Mehtap Özgül, we served as SOD Global Messengers and had the honor of representing our country – a task we mastered wonderfully as a team. The world has seen: When we work together, we can accomplish so much!

In addition to the award ceremony for golf, I had the honor of presenting an award at the Special Olympics Festival. There were so many people there when I presented the award to the inclusive band. I had never seen anything like it. It was pure adrenaline. Finally feeling accepted. I share these stories not only from my perspective, but on behalf of all the athletes who participated and contributed to the World Games. I was deeply moved that we were finally getting the attention we deserved.

With the World Games, we took a big step towards inclusion. But so much more needs to be done! I hope that Easy Language will be used in more countries.

I hope that more clubs open their doors to people with disabilities. That athletes everywhere can participate in sports and, most importantly, have a voice. Club boards should always be inclusive, so that everyone sits at the table and talks together.

I hope that we can finally approach each other openly and not be so afraid. We are one society. And a society is only as strong as its members.



Mark Solomeyer
Vice President Athletes of
Special Olympics Germany

From the very beginning, Special Olympics Germany's goal was for the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 to be a flagship event to raise awareness for social inclusion. To achieve this, it was necessary to establish meeting places across the country to change mindsets, establish new networks and promote the participation of people with intellectual disabilities.

Looking back on the World Games 2023, we can say that together, as a whole organization and with a strong sense of unity, we successfully accomplished this important task! The Host Town program made it possible for more than 200 inclusive municipalities to become part of the Games prior to the competitions. They warmly welcomed athletes and their delegation members from around the world and introduced them to local culture and traditions. The implementation of the diverse program would not have been possible without some 18,000 volunteers. They came from 126 countries to ensure the smooth running of a wide range of areas – from catering to sports competitions. The Special Olympics Festival at the Neptune Fountain (Neptunbrunnen) and the Summer Garden at the exhibition center both offered an inclusive experience for all sports and culture enthusiasts, with a colorful stage program, numerous interactive activities and sports activities for everyone. Participants and visitors of the World Games as well as Berlin residents and tourists from near and far came together. Most importantly, the Special Olympics athletes were visible in Berlin and throughout Germany during the summer. They bravely gave their best in 26 sports and showed the world what they are capable of. It is crucial to maintain and strengthen this public awareness they garnered. The Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 received substantial attention from the media alliance, which included 11 of Germany's largest TV and media companies. They covered the events live, in highlights and summaries, online or in print, bringing the achievements, emotions and personal stories of the athletes closer to the people. The Opening Ceremony alone drew some 50,000 spectators to the Olympic Stadium, with millions more watching on television and livestream.

Now, Special Olympics in Germany is moving forward positively and with great momentum after the World Games 2023. The Games provided a significant boost and accelerator for the development of Special Olympics Germany at the national and regional levels. Networks in various areas of social life such as politics, media, sports, education, health, culture, work and social affairs have been significantly expanded and strengthened. Through #ZusammenInklusiv (#InclusiveTogether), Germany's largest inclusion movement, these newly acquired networks and structures will be further developed and maintained. Successful concepts and approaches will serve as best practice examples for the national organization and (inclusive) sports in Germany.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the partners, supporters and friends of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023. The active support of everyone has contributed significantly to the success of the Games. My heartfelt thanks go to the two sponsors, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, and the Berlin Senate Department for the Interior and Sports. The great mutual trust shown throughout the entire journey – from the bidding process to overcoming significant challenges and handling the eventful week of the Games – has allowed us to proudly look back on an inclusive major sports event that will have a significant impact on numerous future sports events.

#Unbeatable**Together**

Christiane Krajewski
President of the
World Games Committee

Sven Albrecht
CEO Special Olympics
World Games Berlin 2023

Carsten Kranz
COO Special Olympics World
Games Berlin 2023

FACTS & FIGURES

224
HOST TOWNS

330.000
SPECTATORS

176
DELEGATIONS

18.000
VOLUNTEERS

1.800
MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

4.300
HONORED GUESTS

110.000
TICKETS ISSUED

15.351
HEALTHY ATHLETES® SCREENINGS

6.000
ATHLETES & UNIFIED PARTNERS

3.000
COACHES & DELEGATIONS STAFF

48 % female Athletes

50.000 Opening Ceremony Spectators

6.000 Family Members

591 hours Media coverage (Streaming and TV)

60+ Ministers and Government Officials

98% of Delegations attending Healthy Athletes©

93% of Athletes who were happy with the overall experience at the Games

78% of Athletes achieved a personal best performance at the World Games in Berlin

10,9 billion Event impressions in media

255,1 Mio. € Total economic value added for the city of Berlin through SOWG 2023

SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD GAMES BERLIN 2023

Why? What? When? Where? Who?

In 2023, the Special Olympics World Games were held in Germany for the first time in their history. Berlin and the whole of Germany welcomed 176 delegations from all over the world in June.

Why have the Special Olympics World Games in Germany and Berlin?

Because it was necessary! Germany has committed itself to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, but is far from achieving its self-imposed goals. An **inclusive society** where people with intellectual disabilities have equal access to sports, education, culture and health care is unfortunately not yet a reality. We believe that the World Games in Germany and Berlin are the right and necessary catalyst to bring about **lasting social change** by raising awareness of our athletes and people with intellectual disabilities in general, by facilitating encounters between people with and without disabilities and by generating recognition for the uniqueness, abilities and talents of all people.

What exactly were the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023?

From the very beginning, we knew that the Berlin World Games had to be more than just a sporting competition. Our goal was to celebrate the world's largest festival of inclusion in Berlin. The World Games included attractive cultural formats, colorful parties and a high-quality, inclusive, scientific supporting program. We were present all over Berlin, always keeping health and accessibility in mind, while never neglecting environmental sustainability. We created a wide range of sporting activities for all people as part of the world-class competitions and managed to bring political decision-makers from all regions of the world to the World Games to convince them of the need for greater inclusion.

We are proud that, for the first time in Special Olympics history, we were able to offer a training day for all athletes; we recruited more volunteers than ever before; and we held the first-ever World Games with admission tickets – and still sold out the venues! Through it all, we took our motto **"By Athletes, for Athletes"** seriously at every step of the planning process, not only by involving the athletes, but also by listening to their ideas, wishes and expectations.

When exactly did the Special Olympics World Games in Germany take place?

Although the World Games ran for eight days from the spectacular Opening Ceremony at the Olympic Stadium to the moving Closing Ceremony in front of the Brandenburg Gate, the actual journey of the delegations, from their arrival in Germany on June 12, 2023 to their departure on June 26, 2023, took exactly two weeks.

Where were the World Games held?

In Berlin – of course! But not only there... During the application process for the World Games, we made it clear that we saw Berlin as just the beginning of a nationwide shift towards a more inclusive society. Despite significant obstacles and initial doubts, we brought the World Games and the issue of inclusion to the whole of Germany through the **Host Town program:** More than 200 cities and municipalities from all 16 federal states welcomed the delegations with open arms for four days before the World Games, developed concepts and created and strengthened inclusive structures. It is one of our greatest wishes and at the same time a great incentive to maintain and institutionalize these structures.

In Berlin itself, the World Games were not limited to venues and sports facilities. We were everywhere: from the Olympic Park in the west to Grünau in the southeast, from Wannsee in the south to the Brandenburg Gate and the Red City Hall in the heart of the sports metropolis Berlin. We were at the Humboldt Forum and the Olympic Stadium, in schools, kindergartens and at Beach(Mitte).

And even those who could not be in Berlin or one of the Host Towns had many opportunities to participate in the World Games: Thanks in part to the tremendous success of the **media alliance** – a consortium of the eleven largest media companies in Germany – the Special Olympics World Games were broadcast on screens in Germany and around the world. Cumulatively, the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 reached more than 4 billion contacts worldwide (Nielsen study SOWG Berlin 2023).

Who were the participants at the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023?

At the time of the World Games, the LOC consisted of 279 passionate, talented, experienced and highly motivated people. Some of us have disabilities, some don't, and we come from **43 nations**. But we were not alone: **18,000 volunteers,** more than 500 key helpers, approximately 1,100 sports officials, the entire national organization (SOG) with its structures and many, many other helping hands contributed to the success of the World Games.
A total of **6,000 athletes** and Unified Partners, as well as 3,000 other delegation members and 6,000 family members experienced an unforgettable time in Berlin. **330,000 people** were live spectators during the days of the World Games, 1,800 media representatives from 90 countries covered the games and all together made the World Games a unique experience.

Goals

Germany has made tremendous progress in the area of inclusion in recent years. This also applies to the Special Olympics Germany over the last 20 years. However, this should not neglect the fact that there is still a great need for action to **enable people with intellectual disabilities to participate in society on an equal and self-determined basis.** People with intellectual disabilities still experience exclusion and discrimination in their daily lives. We need fresh awareness in our society! We have to achieve a positive change in our attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities!
The World Games can give German society the strength to achieve the larger goal – the further implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – by stimulating ideas in politics, sports and everyday life. The World Games were for us the necessary catalyst for social inclusion and should serve as a positive example of how inclusion can succeed.

From the outset, we have consistently built this overarching goal on three pillars:

1. Raising awareness about people with intellectual disabilities
2. Establishing a comprehensive municipal level of organization throughout Germany, which has been largely lacking to date, to enable people with intellectual disabilities to participate at the local level. This explicitly includes the regional
3. Empowering people with intellectual disabilities within organizations and society, so that they increasingly stand up for their rights, goals and participation in a self-determined way

In addition, the **athletes of Special Olympics** in Germany have clearly formulated their goals for the World Games: "We want the Games,

- because we want to change the world!
- because we want to be more visible in society, because we want to break down existing prejudices and because we want to live as equals in all areas of life!
- because we want to show what we can achieve and how important we are to society!
- so Special Olympics becomes more well-known and people with and without disabilities understand the importance of the work that the organization does for us!
- because we need more choices and opportunities in and through sports!
- because we want to draw attention to the fact that far too few people with intellectual disabilities participate in sports! We have far fewer opportunities than people without disabilities. We need opportunities in schools, clubs and at work!
- because we want more coverage of our sports. We want to be recognized as athletes!
- because we need better health services!
- because we want to be pioneers worldwide. We want to show that Special Olympics is our organization. That we can organize ourselves locally, get involved and represent our interests. In order to do this, we need assistants who will support us in this sense and training opportunities to prepare us for the tasks ahead. With the World Games we in Germany will create the largest **educational opportunity for people with intellectual disabilities!**
- because we want to help build the first Unified Generation in Germany!
- because we want more inclusive schools in Germany!
- so that the development of a barrier-free (sports) infrastructure is accelerated and we have better access to information. We want digital developments to work for us!
- because we want the opportunity to volunteer and contribute to society!
- because we need more local opportunities. For this, we need better funding for work at the municipal and state level!
- because the (legal) framework should be further improved to ensure our participation in all areas of society!
- because the attention will help us to improve the work of our organization!

From the very beginning, we were convinced that hosting the World Games in Germany would help us achieve these goals!

Success measures
Two and a half years before the start of the World Games, the LOC (Local Organizing Committee) established Measures of Success based on pre-defined strategic goals and aligned with the goals of the Special Olympics movement. A total of **17 measures of success were defined in ten areas:**

COVERAGE

Success measure:		**What we achieved:**
Establish an alliance of at least 8 German TV- and Media companies with with a clear commitment to support the Special Olympics World Games	→	11 TV and Media companies

COMMERCIAL REVENUE

Success measure:		**What we achieved:**
€12MM in sponsorships	→	Sponsorship: €13.5MM (€3MM in cash benefits; €10.5MM value-in-kind)
€1.5MM in fundraising *All figures refer to gross values	→	Fundraising: €450,000 + €3.8MM Media Alliance (of which €3.2MM in cash benefits and €600K value-in-case)

INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Success measure:		**What we achieved:**
170 Host Towns, each delivering their own inclusive initiatives	→	224 Host Towns
Increase awareness of the Special Olympics World Games from 7% to 30%	→	48% awareness achieved in July 2023

GAMES BY ATHLETES FOR ATHLETES

Success measure:		**What we achieved:**
10% of workforce at the Local Organizing Committee represented by people with intellectual disabilities	→	Achieved 5.5% representation during peak team size
40 individuals with intellectual disabilities representing in the working groups of the organizing committee	→	31 people with intellectual disabilities participated in 18 working groups
100 tandem teams, consisting of people with and without intellectual disabilities, to participate as volunteers during the World Games	→	370 volunteers with and without intellectual disabilities formed tandem volunteering teams
Establishment of an Athlete's Forum to facilitate exchange amongst athletes	→	Successfully established a monthly exchange between athletes and other participants

SPECTATORS

Success measure:		**What we achieved:**
300,000 spectators to visit the World Games	→	330,000 spectators visited the World Games

GREENER GAMES

Success measure:		**What we achieved:**
75% of visiting constituent groups to use the public transport network during their stay in Berlin	→	79% achieved. See chapter 5.15 for more details on our "Greener Games" ambitions

SPORTS

Success measure:
23 new cooperations with national sports associations

→

What we achieved:
21 new cooperations

SCIENTIFIC WORK

Success measure:
Collaboration with 20 universities on inclusive projects

→

What we achieved:
66 university projects

50 scientific partners to participate in a Global Forum

→

50 Wissenschaftspartner

POLITICAL ACTIVATION

Success measure:
A European Parliament initiative. Stronger political lobbying on international level.

Planning & realization, together with government partners, of an international conference for inclusion called "The Global Forum for Inclusion – Partnering for Action". Strengthening (political) advocacy at state, national, and international level.

→

What we achieved:
The European Parliament supported the SOWG Berlin 2023 with a financial grant of €2 million. For previous World Games held in EU Member States, this grant was around €6 million. Therefore, the LOC had hoped for a significantly higher grant.
With the adoption of the Berlin Declaration at the Global Forum for Inclusion, global goals for increasing participation were formulated. In addition, never before have so many high-level international government representatives from around the world been guests at the World Games.

DIGITAL INNOVATION

Success measure:
The development and deployment of an athlete-user-friendly World Games app which focuses on accessibility and barrier-free information for athletes and other user groups

→

What we achieved:
An app for everyone. The World Games app provided all user groups with accessible and quickly discoverable information about the World Games, including information on schedules, venues, athletes and sports disciplines, all in 4 language settings (Easy German, German, Easy English, English).
It was also possible to choose between different colors, text sizes, and contrast levels. To ensure a positive experience amongst a diversity of user groups, the app was tested in multiple rounds by people with intellectual disabilities.

New Standards

Beyond the clearly defined and determinable measures of success, we have set new standards in many ways with the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023. We raised the quality of competition by introducing Result Requirement Books and **professional digital scoring and timing technology in all 26 sports**, as well as digital training measures for coaches and officials, bringing us closer to the standards of the Olympic Games. For athletes, for the first time in the history of the World Games, we were able to offer an **additional day of training** at the competition venues – an important step towards equality and recognition of athletic performance. **We expanded the "Easy Language" concept,** launching it in additional languages and ensuring its long-term use by transferring extensive knowledge. Large-scale education and youth initiatives along with tailor-made services have enabled us to sensitize and inspire the youngest members of our society for the World Games and the theme of inclusion, taking an important step towards a Unified Generation. The **Host Town program** let us bring all of Germany on this inclusive journey, and we were able to convince eleven of Germany's largest media companies that they, too, could be #UnbeatableTogether – by covering the World Games together and in coordination.

And last but not least, we have shown that Germany, specifically Berlin, can host large and exciting multi-sport events with long-term benefits. Without new buildings, without wasting resources and without unnecessary extravagance – but with a lot of professionalism, passion and heart". ♥

BACKGROUND

01

1.1 SPECIAL OLYMPICS

With more than five million athletes and Unified Partners in over 170 countries, Special Olympics is the **world's largest sports movement for people with intellectual and multiple disabilities** and is officially recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

In addition to the power of sports, people with intellectual and multiple disabilities are supported through health, education and qualification programs.

Unified Partners are athletes without intellectual disabilities who team up with athletes with intellectual disabilities. These teams are made up of individuals of similar ages and abilities to make training and competition more exciting.

Special Olympics International
Special Olympics was founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, sister of President John F. Kennedy. Eunice Kennedy Shriver's lifelong mission was to provide opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities, like her sister Rosemary, to participate in sports activities and events, and to advocate for greater rights and acceptance for people with intellectual disabilities.

The first Special Olympics World Games was held in Chicago in 1968, where one thousand athletes from the U.S. and Canada marched into the stadium to gain greater visibility and recognition.

Since its inception, the visibility and impact of Special Olympics in changing the lives of people with disabilities on every continent has grown exponentially. The organization now has six regions where National Programs are organized: Africa, Asia-Pacific, East Asia, Europe/Eurasia, Latin America, Middle East/North Africa and North America.

Timothy Shriver, son of Eunice Kennedy Shriver, is the Chairman of Special Olympics International. Mary Davis has served as International CEO since 2016.

Special Olympics International was responsible for selecting Berlin to host the 2023 World Games. The World Games are the flagship event of the Special Olympics movement and have become an international celebration of inclusion, acceptance and unity.

Special Olympics Deutschland
Special Olympics Germany e. V. (SOG) was founded on October 3, 1991. In 2007, SOG became a member of the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB) as an organization with special responsibilities, and, in December 2018, it was classified as a **non-Olympic top-level organization** within the DOSB structure.

SOG is led by an honorary board of directors and operates a national office in Berlin, which currently consists of 48 full-time employees. **Christiane Krajewski is the president of SOG and Sven Albrecht is the general secretary.**

SOG cooperates with all institutions and organizations involved in the support and care of people with intellectual disabilities. Examples are Lebenshilfe (Life Assistance), the Bundesvereinigung Evangelische Behindertenhilfe (Federal Association for Evangelical Disability Assistance), the Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Werkstätten (Federal Working Group of Workshops), Caritas, as well as other social associations and organizations.

SOG acts as an interface and competence center between the aforementioned institutions, organized sports and institutions and facilities for people with intellectual disabilities, such as schools, workshops and residential facilities.
The members of SOG are mainly organizations, workshops and schools for people with intellectual disabilities, as well as associations and individuals. They are organized in 16 Regional Associations. Today, SOG includes more than **40,000 athletes** in all federal states who train regularly in 1,100 member organizations.

SOG has clearly formulated strategic goals regarding inclusion and is a sought-after contact in the social discussion and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Sven Albrecht,
General Secretary of SOG

1.2 THE VISION

Creating an inclusive community through the unifying power of sports. People with intellectual disabilities obtain equal access to sports, education, culture and health care.

The Special Olympics Weltspiele Germany as a catalyst

The Special Olympics World Games 2023 marked the beginning of a Unified Era, a significant milestone for the next 50 years of the Special Olympics movement.

The Special Olympics World Games 2023 "broke down walls" – walls between nations, between cultures and between people with and without intellectual disabilities. No city symbolized this better than Berlin. The Games have shown that athletes are the driving force behind a Unified Generation. A Unified Generation of children and young people from schools, clubs and youth facilities, together with dedicated teachers, coaches and social workers. Together, they have made inclusion tangible, breaking down barriers, creating long-term encounters, initiating joint projects and fostering contact between children and young people with and without intellectual disabilities. The reach of the World Games radiated the idea of inclusion from the heart of Europe to the world.

The Special Olympics World Games 2023 have changed the perception of people with intellectual disabilities across Germany and broken down existing prejudices. They have shown that athletes can shape their own future in all aspects of life. The guiding principle throughout the planning and execution of the Games has always been: Games by Athletes for Athletes. They were at the center – as confident athletes, as volunteers, as staff, as reporters, as fundraisers, as advocates speaking for themselves.

The Special Olympics World Games 2023 have led to increased collaboration between disability organizations and sports clubs to create sustainable sports opportunities for people with disabilities.

In essence, the Special Olympics World Games 2023 acted as a catalyst to raise awareness and laid the foundation for the permanent implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Germany. The Games provided a positive example of how inclusion can be achieved.

1.3 FROM THE IDEA TO THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

In 2011, Special Olympics Germany first considered the possibility of hosting the World Games in Germany. However, after an internal analysis, it was determined that such a large project would be premature for the relatively young organization.
In the years that followed, the organization continued to evolve and the idea of hosting the World Games in Germany resurfaced in anticipation of Special Olympics Germany's 25th anniversary in **2016.** As part of a subsequent strategic process for the organization, Special Olympics Germany, along with the Special Olympics Regional Associations, and especially athletes and partners, **collectively decided to pursue the hosting of the World Games in Germany.**
Discussions were then held with several cities as potential host locations. Through this process, Berlin quickly emerged as the perfect host city. Berlin's reputation as a cosmopolitan metropolis, coupled with the city's strong interest in hosting the Games, made it the clear choice. In addition, Berlin had demonstrated its ability to successfully host numerous major sporting events in the preceding years, justifying its status as a sporting metropolis. Berlin also had the necessary (sports) infrastructure to host such a large multi-sport event.

In the fall of 2017, SOI officially launched the bidding process for the 2023 World Games. At the end of 2017, Special Olympics Germany submitted an official expression of interest to Special Olympics International and received the required documents in January **2018,** including the Bid Questionnaire and templates for the Games Agreement and Technical Manuals. This got the bid ball rolling. Over the next six months, **the bid concept was developed and the Bid Book was prepared.** The bid was developed in close cooperation with athlete representatives, representatives of the state of Berlin and the federal government, representatives of organizations and the media, and the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB). To facilitate this process, the PROPROJEKT agency, which is highly experienced in advising major sporting events, joined the team. On July 15, 2018, the bid documents were submitted to Special Olympics International. This was followed by an evaluation visit paid by SOI to Berlin from September 10 to 13, 2018. **On November 13, 2018, Berlin was unanimously selected to host the Special Olympics World Summer Games 2023.**

After winning the bid to host the Special Olympics World Summer Games 2023, a small team of SOG staff, supported by PROPROJEKT, initially prepared the key elements for implementing the event; this task was handled by the Local Organizing Committee until the beginning of 2020.

Key areas of focus during this **implementation phase** included developing the funding principles and legal structure, defining the organizational structure, the staff plan and work packages, consolidating the bid concept and financial plan, milestone planning and reporting, and establishing sustainability programs. In addition, the Games Agreement was negotiated with SOI.

An unprecedented approach for major sporting events in Germany was established with the agreement on **joint funding guidelines of the State of Berlin and the Federal Ministry of the Interior.** This included the determination of a lump sum for organizational costs and the mandatory monitoring of the social, environmental and economic impact of the event based on more than 80 indicators in accordance with the Berlin City Return. The federal government and the state of Berlin made the necessary decisions for the equal financing of the event. The legal structure chosen was a non-profit limited liability company (gGmbH) with no direct involvement of the public sector. The Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and the Berlin Senate were closely involved in the operational work of the LOC through a joint steering group with sub-groups for funding and event organization. For strategic issues, the federal and state governments were represented at the ministerial level in the World Games Committee advisory body.

The management positions of the LOC were filled and the first positions in the established work areas were posted in accordance with the vacancy guidelines for public service employment.

On **January 30, 2020,** the official signing of the Games Agreement took place at Schloss Bellevue in the presence of German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and 60 Special Olympics athletes. **The agreement was signed** by Christiane Krajewski, President of Special Olympics Germany, and Dr. Timothy Shriver, Chairman of Special Olympics International.

2017

- **Expression of Interest sent to SOI**
(December)

2018

- **Submission of Bid Book**
(July 15)
- **SOI Inspection Visit**
(September 10–13)
- **Statement of Support from All Factions of the German Bundestag**
(November 8)
- **Award of Games**
(November 13)

2019

- **Funding commitments from the State of Berlin and the federal government**
(Summer)
- **Establishment of the Special Olympics Berlin 2023 Organizing Committee gGmbH as the legal entity for the event and the Local Organizing Committee (LOC)**
(December)

2020

- **Signing of the Games Agreement between SOI, LOC and SOG and establishment of the World Games Committee**
(January 30)

2021

- **Presentation of the logo for the National Games Berlin 2022 and the World Games Berlin 2023**
(December 14)

2022

- **Announcement of the municipalities for the World Games Host Town program**
(January 26)
- **National Games Berlin 2022**
(June 19–24)

2023

- **Opening Ceremony World Games Berlin 2023**
(June 17)
- **Closing Ceremony World Games Berlin 2023**
(June 25)

1.4 THE CHALLENGES

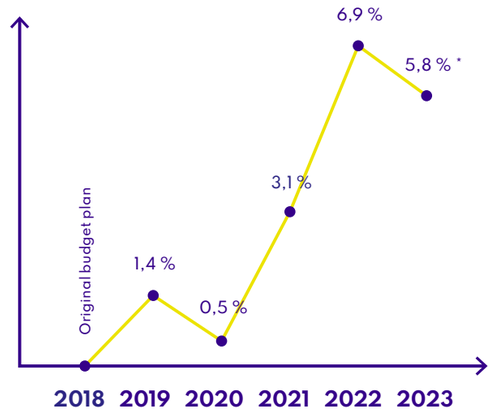
Like few LOCs before it, the team faced unexpected external challenges from its inception, challenges that could not have been foreseen in the early planning and budgeting stages.

Just one week after the LOC's office space was set up in Gerichtstraße, the first widespread **coronavirus lockdown** in Germany was imposed. For months, direct in-person interactions within the team were minimized and communication shifted to digital channels. In addition to the difficulties these circumstances created for the general work environment, the newly formed LOC faced the additional challenge of having little or no existing structures to build upon. The team began to grow just as the lockdown began. Personal onboarding, training of staff and helping employees get to know each other were almost impossible. For many of the staff who moved to Berlin to work on the planning and organization of the World Games, these circumstances posed a significant challenge and burden, not only in the workplace, but also in their personal lives. The restrictions caused by the pandemic continued in various forms for almost the entire planning period of the LOC. It was not until shortly before the Special Olympics National Games 2022 that the last restrictions in daily life were lifted.

In addition to hindering collaboration among team members, the coronavirus pandemic resulted in significant additional costs, including necessary concept changes to catering, cleaning and overlay, additional hardware and software for digital work, additional staff time to coordinate all coronavirus activities, increased sick leave, and direct costs for office and event protection and testing measures. In total, the direct and indirect additional costs due to the coronavirus pandemic amounted to approximately EUR 7.7 million.

Shortly after the pandemic, **inflation** began to rise in Germany. In the years following the initial budget planning, inflation rate in Germany reached levels not seen in decades.

Inflation rate 2018 – 2023

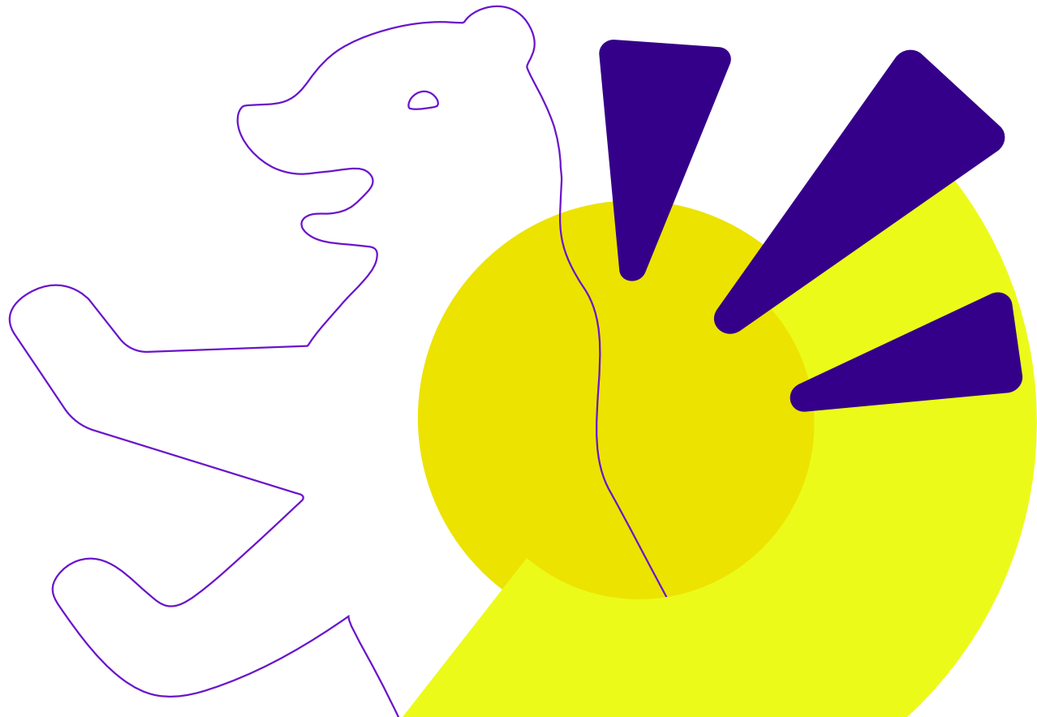


*Estimate by ifo Institut, June 21, 2023

The figures presented show the general price increase that was noticed in all areas. Due to catch-up effects after the pandemic and limited supply in the events industry, prices for certain services and materials in this sector increased significantly during the years of the 2022 National Games and the 2023 World Games.
The LOC also faced additional, at least unexpected, challenges due to **international tensions** before and during the World Games. Notable among these was the **war in Ukraine** and the related question of how to deal appropriately with the national Special Olympics programs of Russia and Belarus. In close consultation with the German Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Berlin Senate, as well as the Guidelines of the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), and following their own convictions, the SOG (Special Olympics Germany) board and the LOC ultimately came to the conclusion that the participation of both programs in the World Games was not possible. SOI (Special Olympics International) supported this decision by the LOC. A stronger position by SOI was desirable, at least from the perspective of the LOC.

Another example of **intercultural challenges** during the World Games was the relationship between the programs of SO Israel and SO Palestine. Provocations led to the threatened withdrawal of individual teams and athletes, which was fortunately averted through the mediation efforts of SOI and the LOC.

In addition to challenges that clearly originated outside the Special Olympics movement, the LOC also faced uncertainties that were more focused on the competitions and had their origins within Special Olympics. On a technical level, the **"SO-Connect"** registration system had to be replaced by a new LOC-funded registration system after numerous problems before and during the National Games. At the sports level, SOI mandated a shift in many sports to **competition formats that were untested,** at least at this level. This led to discrepancies in the national programs and difficulties in the registration process due to a lack of information from the international federation, even before the World Games. During the World Games, the untested system resulted in competitions of varying quality due to significant performance differences within the assigned classes.



THE LOCAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

The LOC was established as a non-profit limited liability company (gGmbH) and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of SOG. Special Olympics Germany (SOG) entrusted the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 Organizing Committee gGmbH with the planning, preparation, implementation and follow-up for the National Games 2022 and the World Games 2023 in Berlin.

2.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The following objectives were central to the establishment of a gGmbH under the umbrella of the National Special Olympics Program:

- In order to ensure the sustainable goals of the Special Olympics movement in Germany, a close connection and the possibility of substantial **intervention by the national organization (SOG) with regard to the LOC** was necessary.
- At the same time, the LOC had to be a legally **independent structure,** contractually endowed with extensive decision-making powers, flexible, and capable of making quick decisions.
- The **liability risk** was minimized by choosing a limited liability company (GmbH) as the legal form.
- The **non-profit nature** of the structure was unquestionable.

In the end, the legal construct of a non-profit limited liability company (gGmbH) under the umbrella of Special Olympics Deutschland e.V. seemed to be the best option. With the benefit of hindsight from the perspective of the fall of 2023, this decision proved to be wise.
The non-profit limited liability company (gGmbH) and SOG (registered association) form a consolidated group for tax purposes. SOG is also involved in the handling of public subsidies.

The bodies of the non-profit limited liability company are defined as follows:

- The **Shareholder Meeting,** consisting of three to a maximum of five appointed members of the SOG board. President Christiane Krajewski chairs the Shareholder Meeting. The Shareholder Meeting is the supervisory and goal-setting body on the strategic level.
- The management of the non-profit limited liability company with Sven Albrecht as CEO and Carsten Kranz as COO.
- The World Games Committee as a strategic advisory and participation body.

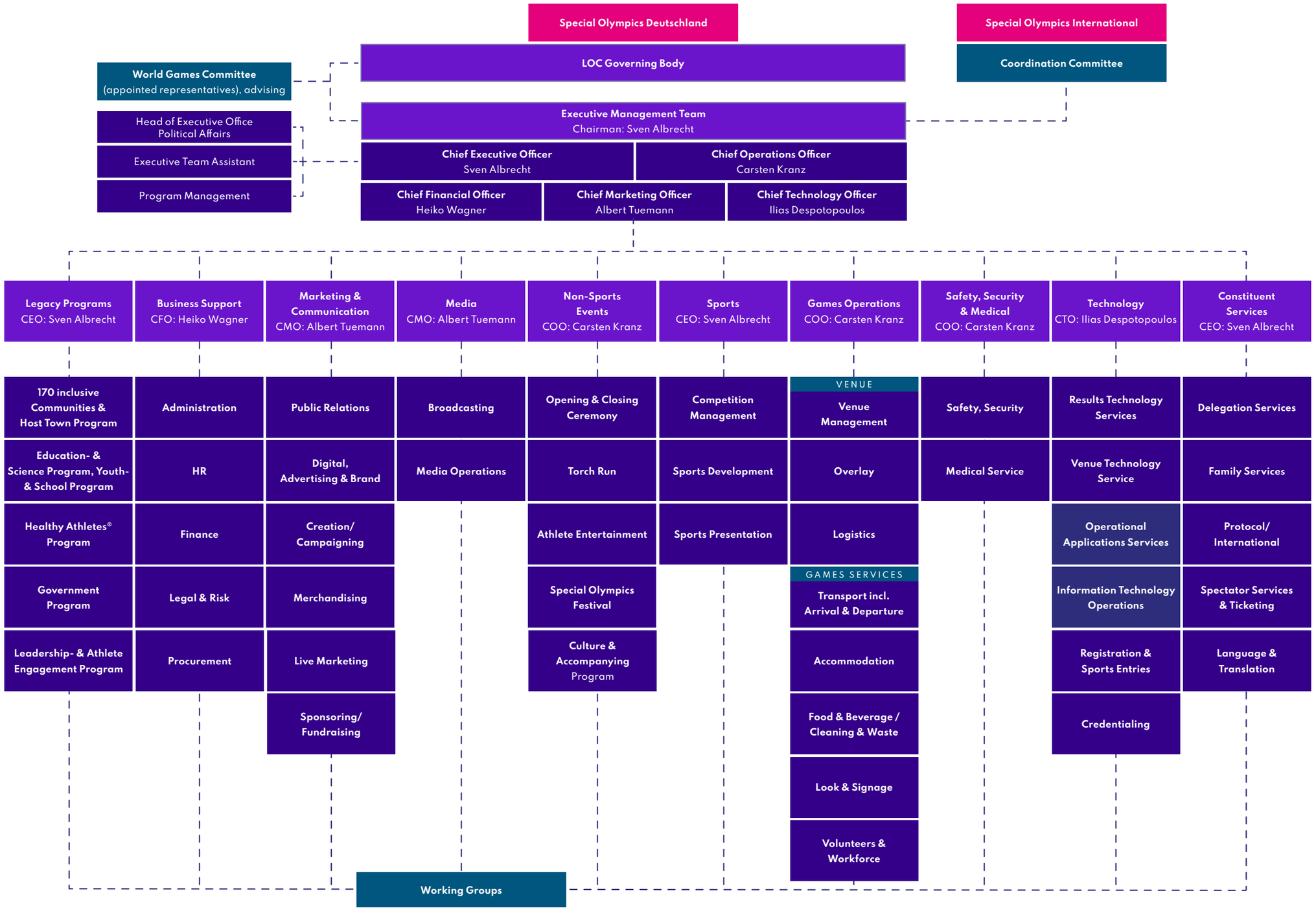
A contractual agreement between SOG and the LOC further specifies the framework for the activities of the non-profit limited liability company, in particular with regard to its comprehensive independence in operational decisions and its interaction with the international federation, as well as the closer integration of SOG into sustainability goals that go beyond the World Games.

2.2 OFFICE SPACE

Shortly after the foundation of the non-profit limited liability company, the still “young” LOC moved into the newly opened **co-working space** “Unicorn” at Gerichtstraße 51 in the Berlin **district of Wedding** at the beginning of March 2020. The particular advantage of the co-working space model is that the number of workstations can be continuously increased. However, the originally planned development was abruptly interrupted by the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic – and the first lockdown occurred before the new office space was fully furnished. Due to varying labor regulations and internal policies, the expansion of the space had to be continually adapted to meet the applicable requirements for capacity, social distancing, and working from home.

By the end of 2021, it was clear that Unicorn would no longer be able to accommodate the rapidly growing team. The search for new, suitable office space began. In the course of advanced negotiations with NIKE regarding a sponsorship partnership, the opportunity arose to move into fully equipped but currently vacant **office space at the NIKE Germany headquarters in Berlin Friedrichshain.** After weighing all the alternatives, this option was chosen as the most economical, and so the 123 LOC employees moved into the new LOC offices in Warschauer Strasse 70a on March 1, 2022. Here, too, it was possible to increase the workspace capacity, so that the initial 106 workstations grew to 188 by May 2023. The workspaces and meeting rooms were spread across two floors of open-plan workspace, with each division having its own designated area. To facilitate communication within and between departments, and to respond to the change in working conditions brought about by the coronavirus and flexible working models, a systematic clean desk policy was introduced. This meant that employees sat together in configurations that changed daily, and the available workspace was distributed as efficiently as possible. Despite these measures and the regular expansion of rented space, there was still a shortage of space in the months leading up to the World Games. As a result, meeting rooms were occasionally used as workspaces and colleagues had to share desks.
However, the NIKE space’s central location, easy access to public transportation, and extremely modern facilities provided the LOC with a near-perfect working environment for the remaining time up to the World Games. The open space concept and good opportunities for hybrid and agile working provided a framework to compensate for the communication shortcomings during the coronavirus pandemic.

2.3 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND MEETING FORMATS



SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD GAMES BERLIN 2023
THE LOCAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

The non-profit limited liability company (gGmbH) was led and represented by Sven Albrecht (Chief Executive Officer (CEO) / Chairman of the Board) and Carsten Kranz (Chief Operation Officer (COO) / Managing Director). Further members of **management** were Heiko Wagner (Chief Financial Officer (CFO)), Albert Tuemann (Chief Marketing Officer (CMO)) as registered officer and Ilias Despotopoulos (Chief Technology Officer (CTO)).

In addition to the five members of management, the operational level of the LOC consisted of ten organizational areas:

- Sustainability (Legacy)
- Business Support
- Marketing
- Media, Broadcasting & Public Relations
- Accompanying Program (Non-Sports Events)
- Sports
- Games Operations
- Safety, Security & Medical
- Technology
- Constituent Services

Each division was headed by a **director** or directly by a member of management, and in turn consisted of several functional areas (FAs) representing the working areas of the divisions. The Office of Management and Program Management reported directly to Management as staff units. The various technical issues were addressed directly at the level of the divisions and functional areas (FAs) (see the Appendix for a detailed list of responsibilities for each department and functional area).

Even more than in the case of temporary organizing committees in general, there was a significant focus on networking and coordinating the timing and content of all processes across the different areas within the LOC in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. In order to institutionalize these processes, several internal exchange formats were established:

C-Level Meetings:
Weekly meetings (1.5 hours) held by executive management and Program Management to discuss strategic issues and coordinate the agenda for the upcoming Leadership Team meeting. C-level meetings were primarily held digitally.

Leadership team meetings:
Weekly meetings of the management, directors, a representative from SOG and Program Management to report on current project progress and discuss current and upcoming high-level decisions and challenges. Leadership Team meetings were primarily conducted in a hybrid format, with in-person attendance encouraged.

All Staff Meetings:

- Weekly meetings (30 minutes) as a fixed format for regular communication, introducing new colleagues, communicating decisions and news, and addressing current issues. The weekly All Staff Meetings were always held digitally and simultaneously translated into easy German.
- In addition, a two-hour monthly all staff meeting (digital) provided a general project overview as well as an introduction to and training in topics relevant to the entire LOC.
- A total of six retreats were held, bringing the entire LOC together for one to two days outside of the office. The purpose of these team retreats was twofold: to address key issues and to strengthen team cohesion. One retreat was held entirely digitally due to the pandemic.

In addition to the LOC within the non-profit limited liability company, the organizational structure of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 includes **key stakeholders.** These are primarily Special Olympics Germany **(SOG)** and Special Olympics International **(SOI).** In addition, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Community and Building **(BMI)** and the Senate of Berlin – in particular the Senate Department for the Interior and Sport **(SenInn)** – are particularly relevant to the work of the LOC as the event's main supporters. Collaboration with these stakeholders is discussed in more detail in chapter 3.
As an additional overarching body of the LOC, a **World Games Committee** was established to act as an advisory body to the LOC in all aspects of preparation, delivery and post-event activities, and to assist with fundraising and networking. The President of the World Games Committee was Christiane Krajewski, President of SOG.

World Games Committee

The World Games Committee, the highest advisory body of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 (SOWG Berlin 2023), consisted of prominent individuals and organizations from the political, business and sports communities, as well as disability organizations and the media. Membership on the World Games Committee was based on individuals and their roles. The members of this committee served as an advisory and representative body in all matters related to the preparation, execution and post-event activities of the SOWG Berlin 2023. In addition, committee members supported the event in a variety of ways: attending representative events to raise public awareness of SOWG Berlin 2023; promoting image-building efforts; establishing and developing long-term impact areas to improve the social inclusion of people with disabilities; fundraising efforts; initiating a broad movement for inclusion; activating their own networks and coordinating overarching network activities; working towards a sustainable impact as a result of the Games and strengthening the Special Olympics movement in Germany. Between January 2020 and September 2023, a total of ten meetings were held, initially in person, later purely in a digital or hybrid format due to the pandemic. These meetings always started with an initial report on the current state of preparations before moving on to discuss specific topics such as the media alliance, communication campaigns or the sustainability concept for the World Games. Detailed minutes of all meetings were taken and, together with the presentation, shared with all committee members afterwards. In retrospect, the different disciplines and expertise of the individual members proved to be particularly beneficial in the discussion, development and implementation of the various topics. The expertise and networks they brought with them always provided great support and enrichment to the work of the LOC.

Diversity is our strength!
These are the first World Games designed by athletes for athletes. We actively involve people with disabilities in our decisions and our work. We want more people with disabilities to be involved in volunteer and professional roles. Tolerance and appreciation guide our actions!

We respect each other.

We are open to all people, regardless of origin, gender, creed, age, sexual orientation or disability. We oppose all forms of discrimination and racism.

We condemn all forms of violence, whether physical, emotional or sexual. We are a learning organization! We learn from each other and expand our knowledge. We ask when we don't know. We share our knowledge. We support each other. We are allowed to make mistakes. We take responsibility. Team spirit is central!

We work to create opportunities for physical activity for people with intellectual disabilities in our country, based on the idea and philosophy of the Special Olympics movement. Through physical activity, games, sports, health promotion and education, we support the personal development of people with intellectual disabilities.

We contribute to the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in society based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We operate on a local, national and international level (athletes, member organizations, Special Olympics Regional Associations, SOG, Special Olympics Europe Eurasia (SOEE), SOI). We see the SOWG Berlin 2023 as an opportunity for the sustainable development of our entire organization.

2.4 STAFF

Even before the establishment of the non-profit limited liability company (gGmbH), the management and the Human Resources (HR) department emphasized the importance of establishing a World Games corporate culture. This culture was not only outlined in an employee handbook, but also practiced on a daily basis. Under the motto #TeamSOG (#TeamSOD) and #TogetherStrong (#GemeinsamStark), there was always a strong interest in ensuring that SOG and the LOC would grow together and create personal and professional interfaces, even when the separation of office space became necessary due to the rapidly growing team shortly after the establishment of the non-profit company. The values that should shape the cooperation within the LOC were aligned with the Code of Ethics and the rules of good governance. Additional guidelines for working together were drafted by the staff and subsequently adopted by the entire team. An excerpt from the handbook provides an insight into the culture of collaboration.
A **common understanding of leadership** was also discussed, adopted, and documented in the handbook. Key points included collegial and friendly interaction, as well as the adoption of the informal "you" ("Du" in German). While the company structure defined different levels of hierarchy and responsibility, an open-door policy was practiced, and self-confidence and empowerment of all employees was encouraged. Agile working groups and project teams were successfully established as part of a flat hierarchy. A culture of honest and open feedback and personal exchange was encouraged and expected.

Starting in March 2020, the pandemic subjected the forms of collaboration to a tough test and required significant adjustments to the daily work routine. For about 24 months, direct personal interaction was no longer the focus. Nevertheless, the office space in the Berlin Wedding co-working space continued to be used and new employees were given the opportunity to come to the office, subject to the applicable rules.

On a strategic level, the following considerations were a "good balance" and relevant for the **team composition:**

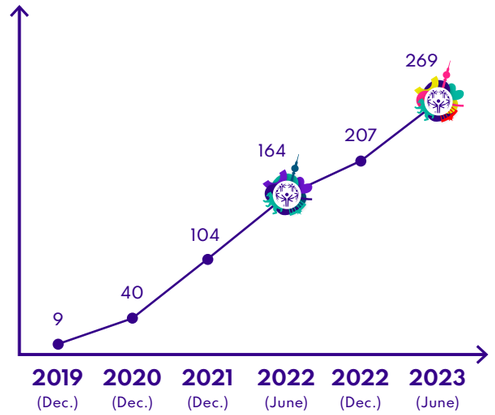
- An appropriate proportion of staff with Special Olympics experience, as well as staff with backgrounds in other major (sporting) events;
- Staff with experience in Berlin and a national perspective on the one hand, and staff from abroad with an international perspective on the other;
- A focus on the sports aspect, while also including an appropriate proportion of employees with expertise in non-sporting areas;
- The seamless integration of people with disabilities into the team.

In terms of **recruitment,** the impact of the pandemic on the event industry was clearly felt. With the onset of the pandemic, there was an increase in the number of applications, as many positions in the events industry were no longer needed and the relatively long-term nature of employment with the LOC was very attractive to applicants. As a result, many qualified and experienced colleagues were recruited. However, as the number of major (sporting) events taking place concurrently in 2022 increased, competition for qualified staff increased, and, because the duration of the contract became shorter, it was more difficult to secure the necessary staff. This was particularly pronounced in the Technology areas and parts of the Operations division. In cases where hiring was not possible, models involving external services, fees and consulting were often used as alternatives. In these cases, however, the goal was to closely integrate the individuals concerned into the structures of the LOC.

While the total number of employees during the World Games was initially estimated at 140 hired employees plus contractors during the bid phase in 2018, by June 2023 there were actually more than 200 employees and almost 80 contractors. In total, 279 people were employed by the LOC or worked as contractors/freelancers for the LOC in connection with the World Games.

Change in the number of employees in the LOC

(employees + contractors in comparable position)



There are several reasons for the **increase in the number of staff** compared to the original plans:

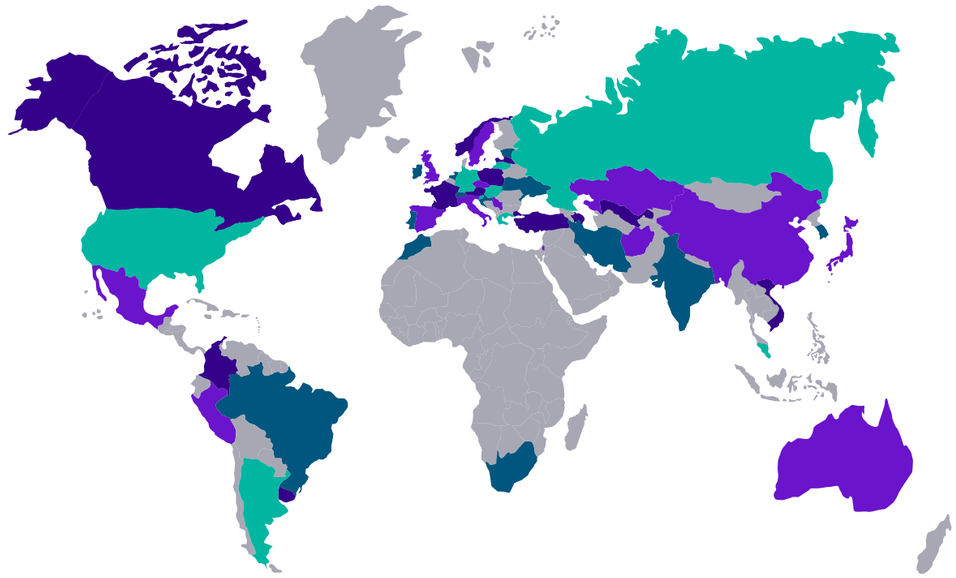
- Increased complexity of the event and individual areas since the bid phase;
- Direct and indirect effects of the coronavirus pandemic;
- Underestimation in initially planned staffing levels, especially in the Operations area.
- The lack of relevant event experience and the quality of the staff had to be partly compensated by increasing the quantity and creating additional positions.

Due to the "no betterment" clause defined in the funding guidelines (based on the collective bargaining agreement for public sector employees (TVöD)), it was a challenge for the LOC to recruit qualified and experienced indi-

viduals for permanent positions in some areas for the SOWG Berlin 2023. Particularly in the Operations and Technology subareas, the **labor market** was tight and there was a shortage of skilled workers. The talent pool in these areas was particularly limited in the local and national labor market.

For people with disabilities who had previously worked in workshops, the transition to the LOC and the open labor market proved challenging. This step into temporary employment, as offered by the LOC, was and often remains risky and financially unattractive. This situation made it clear that the conditions for real inclusion in the labor market were currently unsatisfactory and that the LOC as a potential employer faced significant limitations.

A high level of **job satisfaction** and well-being for the company's employees was considered a high priority by various departments and stakeholders (management, department heads, HR) in the LOC. Measures were planned, implemented and institutionalized by HR. While the overall employee satisfaction in parts of the LOC did not meet the set expectations during the peak of the pandemic and in the run-up to the National Games 2022, in retrospect it can be said that this situation improved significantly in the year leading up to the World Games. The majority of the team are very positive about the collective work and the results achieved.



***In total, 43 nationalities and over 40 native languages were represented in the LOC.**

Factors and measures under the control of the HR department that contributed to the increase in **well-being/satisfaction** included:

- Establishing a Well-being group composed of colleagues from different hierarchical levels, ages, genders, experience and backgrounds; The group also served as a trusted contact point;
- Team-building activities during retreats, joint (inclusive) sports events, regular informal activities and initiatives;
- Appropriate "celebration" of successes and milestones together;
- Regular feedback meetings conducted by HR; Open feedback sessions were held after three months of employment, also to assess the overall well-being of new employees and optimize the onboarding process;
- Best possible support for the administrative onboarding of foreign employees in Germany and especially in Berlin, including assistance in finding accommodation;
- In coordination with the management and based on the experience of the National Games, external support from a qualified conflict manager/coach to help individual employees and teams cope with overwhelming situations;
- Last but not least, the very positive working environment in the office space on Warschauer Strasse contributed positively to employee satisfaction.

In retrospect, it is clear that **the challenges of a constantly growing team,** the demands on senior managers and directors in terms of their professional and human resources management, and the risk of excessive demands on individuals were underestimated at the beginning of the planning process. Many improvement processes and actions were reactive rather than proactive. This set of issues should have been given more attention in the early planning stages.

Finally, the prevailing challenge of legal working time regulations in the event sector as a whole should be mentioned in this chapter. In particular, the three weeks of Games (Games Time) presented an extreme challenge. The expansion of contributing people to include a five-figure number of volunteers and a similar number of service providers basically placed all full-time staff in the role of leaders, with statutory **working hour regulations** continuing to apply at the same time. This situation presented significant challenges to the LOC leadership.

2.5 FINANCING

The Organizing Committee started with a planned **budget of just under EUR 90 million** in accordance with the Bid Book submitted in 2017. This budget was already roughly allocated to the various functional areas and formed the basis for further planning. It was a gross budget, i.e., the expenses included VAT, and the reimbursement of VAT payments was regarded as income.

Once the divisions and functional areas were staffed, the budget became more specific and refined. This also led to adjustments in the required resources and shifts. **Significant changes in the general circumstances,** first due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, later due to the ongoing war in Ukraine and the associated high general price increases, especially in the areas of energy and catering, and particularly in the events sector, also necessitated an **increase in the budget to a final total of just under EUR 130 million.** In addition to the budgets that had to be submitted to the funding agencies at fixed intervals and prepared accordingly, the financial plan was continuously monitored by means of a rolling forecast process in constant coordination with the individual functional areas. This was initially done on a three-monthly basis, and later on a monthly basis, taking into account funds already received and contracts already concluded.

Expenses

BUDGET ITEM	DIVISION	VOLUMES gross in €	DESCRIPTION/ITEMS
Sustainability measures	Legacy	1.800.000	Host City program, Youth and School projects, congresses, Healthy Athletes program, Athlete Engagement
Opening and Closing Ceremonies	Non-Sport	5.500.000	Program and production
Support program	Non-Sport	1.000.000	Special Olympics Festival, Torch Run, cultural program
Human resources	Business-Support	23.000.000	Salaries, fees, human resources administration
Administration	Business-Support	9.000.000	Office expenses, project management, insurance, consulting services, contributions
Host broadcasting/ TV production	Media	5.500.000	Production costs, editorial, consulting
Marketing	Marketing	6.500.000	Advertising, sponsorship, public relations, merchandising

Expenses

BUDGET ITEM	DIVISION	VOLUMES gross in €	DESCRIPTION/ITEMS
Sports – competition management	Sport	1.200.000	Officials, equipment, sports development
Sports – presentation and ceremonies	Sport	1.200.000	
Event and sports venues	Operations	10.200.000	Messe Berlin (Exhibition Center), Olympiapark (Olympic Park), SSE, etc.
Accommodation, hotels	Operations	11.000.000	Delegations, employees, officials, etc.
Transportation	Operations	6.300.000	Arrival, public transport, shuttle buses, traffic measures
Infrastructure, logistics and graphics	Operations	16.500.000	Technical equipment, design services, furniture, storage, logistics, signage, design
Volunteers	Operations	2.000.000	Advertising, training, uniforms
Catering and cleaning	Operations	11.700.000	Central catering, drinks, receptions, etc.
Safety, security and medical services	Operations	3.800.000	Safety and security services, medical services, COVID measures, safety and security concept
Guest services	Constituent Service	1.000.000	Ticketing, service offerings
Interpretation and translation	Constituent Service	1.000.000	
Results and timing	Technology	3.900.000	Including databases, LED screens and TV graphics
Sign-up and registration	Technology	900.000	
Technology	Technology	6.500.000	IT systems, communications, databases, applications
		129.500.000	

Expense items, as of September 2023

On the revenue side, a significant portion of the **funding came from the public sector,** specifically the State of Berlin and the Federal Ministry of the Interior. In addition, there was support from **EU funding,** contributions from the Aktion Mensch (Action People) foundation, and the Deutsche Stiftung für Engagement und Ehrenamt (German Foundation for Civic Engagement and Volunteering). In addition, a major global agency was hired to market the World Games, resulting in numerous agreements with **sponsors.** The majority of these agreements involved in-kind contributions.

However, revenue was also challenged by the war in Ukraine, which led to cuts in the EU budget and a noticeable reluctance on the part of companies to sponsor and purchase ticket contingents.

The newly formed **media alliance** helped offset the cost of producing television broadcasts and social media content, while ensuring extensive media coverage of the World Games. In addition, there was significant revenue from the sale of merchandise. For the first time in the history of the World Games, ticket sales also generated revenue.

Income

BUDGET ITEM	VOLUMES gross in €	DESCRIPTION/ITEMS
Funding – federal government/ Federal Ministry of the Interior	48.500.000	
Funding from the state of Berlin	48.500.000	
Funding from the European Union	2.000.000	Via the SOEE
Foundation contributions	1.400.000	Aktion Mensch, DSEE and others
Contributions and ticket sales	1.700.000	National Games entry fees, ticket sales and other
Sponsorships and fundraising	17.000.000	In-kind contributions, cash contributions, donations, grants
Merchandising	900.000	
Other income	9.500.000	Reimbursements, sales revenue, taxes
	129.500.000	

Please note that the expense and income items presented include the realization of the 2022 National Games, which accounts for approximately 10% of the total. Due to the timing of the project, the figures provided represent the status as of September 2023.

2.6 GAMES BY ATHLETES FOR ATHLETES

It was the stated goal of the World Games to involve people with intellectual disabilities in the design and decision-making processes, to learn from their experiences, to listen to their opinions and to gain practical insights: Games by Athletes for Athletes. This was not only true for athletes, but for people with intellectual disabilities in general, some of whom had no background in sports. This perspective was also important for the LOC.
Throughout the preparation and implementation of the World Games, people with intellectual and multiple disabilities worked in various roles within the LOC, both in voluntary and professional positions. One position was filled as an **Event Inclusion Manager,** and in addition, **three employees with an outsourced workplace** in the LOC were still in a contractual relationship with a disability organization.

Furthermore, nine different **thematic working groups** and ten sports working groups were established, with a total of **31 people with intellectual disabilities** who were recruited from the existing Special Olympics Germany network and made important contributions.

These employees were fully integrated into the respective teams of the Legacy and Non-Sports Events divisions and had direct contacts in the specialist divisions. However, other divisions, such as Media, Marketing & Communications, Constituent Services and Games Operations, which wanted to build their concepts based on the expertise and opinions of colleagues with intellectual disabilities, approached them with numerous requests and opportunities for integration.

Examples of areas where they were closely involved include the organization of sports competitions, the content of the Opening Ceremony, accessibility services, infrastructure issues, the development of the World Games visual identity, including the logo and mascot, accessibility at the Special Olympics festivals and in hotels and transportation.

In addition, people with intellectual and multiple disabilities were involved in the following processes:

- Deployment as coaches, **officials,** health advisors and public relations representatives.
- Development and use of **accessible e-learning formats** for people with disabilities.
- Development and use of (accessible) qualification and training materials as well as guidelines and support for inclusive volunteering and detailed approaches to events.
- Preparation of **information materials in Easy Language.**
- Inclusion of people with disabilities as trainers in volunteer training.
- Inclusion of people with disabilities in the **inclusive editorial team,** at press conferences and as moderators on television.
- During the Special Olympics World Games 2023, 360 inclusive volunteers were involved in all areas of the event.

In a fast-paced event business such as the Special Olympics World Games 2023, it was necessary to create an environment across all divisions that "embraced the challenge" of integrating people with intellectual disabilities into work processes so that these employees were valued and integrated according to their interests and strengths. To this end, internal awareness workshops were offered as part of the onboarding process for all employees to introduce topics such as Easy Language or how to deal with different types of disabilities and infrastructural barriers. It was also important for the leadership to emphasize, no later than after the National Games 2022, that inclusion must be "in our DNA" if the Special Olympics World Games 2023 in Berlin were to be the most inclusive (sports) event ever. Therefore, everyone made an effort to provide **Easy Language translations** at all meetings, to ensure that emails to the entire team or event reports were written in both German and English, that the website and app were accessible, and that meetings were prepared in a timely manner and briefings were conducted as requested. However, it was recognized that adhering to these measures was often extremely challenging and time-consuming. Despite all efforts, it was not always possible to take all aspects into account. For example, due to time constraints, it was often not possible to translate texts from English into German, let alone into Easy German.

From an operational point of view, it became clear in the hectic weeks leading up to the event that the established and clearly defined processes of the previous months had to be protected. For example, media requests were often made at very short notice, and in these cases it was sometimes necessary to say "no" because it was no longer possible to adequately prepare for these appointments.

An important lesson learned is that there are limits to inclusion. Nonetheless, we should try to extend these limits to create an accessible and more inclusive society.

However, despite these challenges, employees with intellectual disabilities had the opportunity to fully contribute to the team and the work with all their abilities. As a result, the feedback from employees with intellectual disabilities was overwhelmingly positive: They felt fully integrated, valued as colleagues, and able to contribute their interests and strengths before and during the World Games to make them a success – always with the goal of creating the most inclusive Games ever for our athletes.

PARTICIPATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

3.1 PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Since the initial interest in hosting the World Games in Germany, Special Olympics Germany has attached great importance to broad societal involvement in the development, definition and implementation of goals and measures.

In order to have a far-reaching impact beyond the World Games, an internal Special Olympics participation process and a dialog forum with external stakeholders were set up after the awarding of the event in 2019, and the Unified Generation vision was further specified in concrete goals, impact areas and actions. In five regional conferences throughout Germany, SO members from all Regional Associations were informed about the plans for the World Games and had the opportunity to express their expectations. Three dialog forums provided a platform for representatives from organized sports, disability advocacy, the political community, civil society and the media to contribute ideas for the event, to network and to jointly advance the cause of inclusion. In addition, numerous bilateral meetings were held with stakeholders in these areas who were critical for the event and sustainability in order to promote synergy.

Athletes were actively involved in the planning from the very beginning. An Athletes' Congress brought together athlete representatives in Berlin to discuss not only their expectations for the World Games, but also the development of structures to realize the vision of an event by athletes for athletes.

3.2 SPECIAL OLYMPICS GERMANY

In the early stages of the LOC, formal meetings between the SOG team leaders and the LOC directors were held on a regular basis, approximately every three months. Over time, collaboration became more and more informal and integrated into the daily work of the teams. The level of **collaboration naturally varied** between divisions. As did the degree of collaboration in various areas throughout the project cycle. It is worth noting the different roles played by the headquarters of the SOG team during the **National Games 2022** and the **World Games 2023.** While SOG staff were able to fully support the LOC before and during the National Games in their usual operational roles, many SOG members were fully focused on their commitments as part of the SOG delegation right before and during the World Games. Some exceptions in individual areas included the Event Organization team, which was fully integrated into the LOC organizational structure during the World Games.

There was a two-way flow of staff between SOG and the LOC. Several employees moved from the organization to the LOC during the planning phase for the World Games, and, after the Games, some LOC employees were retained by the SOG organization for continued employment.

In addition to the involvement of the **SOG's central office staff**, the LOC relied heavily on the support of **SOG volunteer structures.** This support was provided through bilateral collaboration between technical experts and in various working groups. External stakeholders not part of the SO were also involved through these working groups. The focus was on the areas of Sports / Sports working groups and the Healthy Athletes program.

Formally, the SOG organization, as the sole shareholder of the nonprofit limited liability company (gGmbH), exerted its influence on the LOC through the Shareholder Meeting.

In addition to the **board of directors,** the **central office** staff, and the volunteer structures of Special Olympics Germany, the **SOG Regional Associations** were also involved in the organization of various aspects of the World Games. The Regional Associations provided significant support to the Host City program. While the LOC was responsible for the overall project management and the operational planning and implementation of the Host Town program, the Regional Associations were responsible for supporting the Host Towns in the implementation of inclusive project ideas. Throughout the project, the LOC and the Regional Associations maintained close communication and held joint information sessions and discussion rounds for the Host Towns. The Regional Associations also assisted the LOC with operational issues related to the Host Towns. In return, the LOC Host Town Program team regularly participated in networking events organized by the Regional Associations and conducted cross-project workshops for the coordinators of the **#Zusammen**Inklusiv projects LIVE, Wir gehören dazu (We Belong to This) and the Host Town program. The focus was on the long-term impact of the projects and how to successfully leverage the momentum generated by the World Games. The close collaboration between the LOC and the Special Olympics Regional Associations was instrumental to the success of the Host Town program.

3.3 SPECIAL OLYMPICS INTERNATIONAL

Special Olympics International (SOI) is the **umbrella organization** for the worldwide Special Olympics movement and is governed by a board of directors chaired by Tim Shriver.

Special Olympics International and **Special Olympics Europe Eurasia (SOEE)** supported the LOC in the preparation and execution of both the National Games 2022 and the World Games 2023 by providing staff, technical delegates from SOI and experts from all disciplines. ESPN, the global television partner of Special Olympics International, broadcast the World Games across its network. Special Olympics Europe Eurasia (SOEE) helped secure European Union funding for the World Games and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) as the broadcast partner.

As the umbrella organization, Special Olympics International was naturally closely involved in all LOC planning processes. SOI provided the basic structures for the event through the **Games Agreement** and Technical Manuals. Throughout the planning process, the LOC and SOI worked together centrally through the **Coordination Committe**e (CoCom). In this format, the LOC Leadership team and the SOI Sports and Competition team, chaired by Lou Lauria, Director of Sports and Competition at SOI, met approximately once per quarter. Due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, many CoCom meetings originally scheduled as in-person meetings were held digitally. In addition to providing general updates on project progress, CoCom meetings included breakout sessions on specific pre-agreed topics, allowing for bilateral or multilateral discussions between LOC and SOI experts.

In hindsight, from the perspective of the LOC, a more active role for SOI within the CoComs (Coordination Committees) would have been desirable. The LOC saw itself primarily as a reporter and would have liked to benefit more from the transfer of knowledge and experience from SOI colleagues. The LOC also recommends for future events that the group of CoCom members be kept as manageable as possible and that it be more strongly populated with decision-makers in order to effectively support project progress.

Outside of CoCom meetings, the various functional areas of the LOC worked bilaterally with their SOI counterparts. The nature and intensity of cooperation varied within these areas.
As an additional format for exchange, the so-called **Strategy Group** was established during the planning phase. This addition was deemed necessary by the LOCs because the CoCom format did not contribute to decision-making to the desired extent. The Strategy Group consisted of the management of the LOC and the event management of SOI and aimed to create a formalized exchange at the decision-making level. This monthly meeting lowered the threshold for escalating issues and promoted faster decision-making. For future events, this format is recommended, and expansion to the SOI management level is desirable, at least in certain cases.

During both event periods, SOI traveled to Berlin with a large delegation. For the National Games in **June 2022, 65 employees of the international federation** were present in Berlin. A significant number of them supported their respective LOC counterparts in their areas. Other employees observed the event to gain important insights for the World Games. In addition, many SOI colleagues spontaneously volunteered to help where short-term support was needed.

For the World Games in **June 2023,** approximately **258 SOI employees** traveled to Berlin. Unlike in 2022, many of those present were operationally involved in the execution of the Games through their roles at SOI. This included areas such as guest management, government programs and delegation services.

Overall, the relationship between SOI and the LOC was one of **partnership and equals** during challenging times. Challenges in the planning process could be addressed openly by the LOC at any time, and SOI generally supported the LOC to the extent possible. However, there were disagreements where the LOC stressed its independence and would have liked to see a different mindset from Special Olympics International. Particularly on critical issues such as funding and intercultural challenges, the LOC felt that SOI did not provide as much support as was possible and desirable for the overall success of the event.

Collaboration with Special Olympics programs from other regions focused on aspects such as knowledge sharing and experience mapping, as well as communication of the World Games in their respective regions. In addition, SO programs were extensively and intensively prepared for participation in the World Games as part of delegation webinars.

Organizational Structure of Special Olympics International for World Games 2023

Special Olympics Board of Directors
led by Chairman Timothy Shriver, Ph.D

Special Olympics Global Leadership Team
led by CEO Mary Davis

SO Europe Eurasia
led by Regional President, David Evangelista

SO World Games Coordination Committee
chaired by Chief of Sports & Competition, Lou Lauria

Divisions:
Finance, Legal & HR, Digital Products & Technology, Global Youth & Education, Government Relations, Health & Research, Leadership & Organizational Development, Marketing Communications & Development, Sport & Competition

3.4 POLITICAL PARTNERS

The most important political partners for the LOC were and are the German federal government with the **German Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community (BMI)** and the **Berlin Senate with the Senate Department for the Interior and Sport (SenInn)**. As the main supporters and funding providers, both entities closely accompanied the LOC at various levels during the entire planning and implementation phase. The basis for this cooperation was laid down in the Games Agreement and the **joint Funding Guideline**s of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Senate Department for the Interior and Sports.

Around the same time as the LOC was established, the Berlin Senate, housed within the Senate Department for the Interior and Sports, formed a **four-member Special Olympics World Games project group**. In addition to supporting the LOC and representing the interests of the City of Berlin within the LOC, this project group developed its own complementary sustainability program entitled **"Inklusion '23"** for which the State of Berlin provided an extra budget. With Inklusion '23, the City of Berlin wanted to use the World Games as an opportunity to raise social awareness of issues such as participation and inclusion and to establish sustainable inclusive structures in Berlin. The program consists of three pillars: Inklusion '23_projects, Inklusion '23_impacts and Inklusion '23_events.

Inklusion '23

Inklusion '23_projects provides financial support to 14 projects in the areas of sports, education, transportation and culture that were selected from a large number of other project ideas in a competitive process. The projects range from the Museum Island to public transportation and an inclusive newsroom. The requirement was that there must be a sustainable benefit and that the results must be available over the long term. An overview of all projects can be found at www.berlin.de/sen/inneres/sportmetropole-berlin.

Inklusion '23_impacts covers policy issues, independent inclusive projects, measures or initiatives started or supported by the program as a result of advice, networking or support. The aim is to make more areas of public life more inclusive. This includes, for example, linking-up with other major sporting events such as UEFA Euro 2024 or the "Inclusion Starts with You" awareness campaign launched in the fall of 2022. A digital awareness-raising campaign was also launched to educate and raise awareness of different types of disabilities and impediments in a playful way (www.inklusion-23wissentogo.berlin).

Inklusion '23_events brings together events and activities that invite exchange and networking. The aim is to bring together stakeholders from politics and civil society to promote inclusion on a broad scale. Events included academic evenings where students and educators could be inspired by the Special Olympics theme, as well as fireside chats on topics such as inclusive experiences in the cultural sector or inclusive volunteering in the medical field. These activities led to new collaborations that had their own lasting impact. For example, the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® program saw a significant increase in medical volunteers during the World Games.

The Senate Project Group was of great value to the LOC, especially in the areas of financing, accompanying communication in the sports metropolis of Berlin, and networking with the city's society and all government actors. **The German government** also established **a position for the Special Olympics World Games** within the Major Sports Events division at the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community. This position served as a continuous point of contact at the federal level and was of similar value to the LOC as the project group at the state level. In addition to the funding described in the chapter on funding, the federal government hosted the reception at the Berlin Olympic Stadium as part of the World Games Opening Ceremony and participated in other ways.

Both organizational units can be considered **exemplary for the support of major sports events** by public funding bodies in Germany. The support provided to the LOC by these structures was invaluable and made a significant contribution to the overall success of the event.

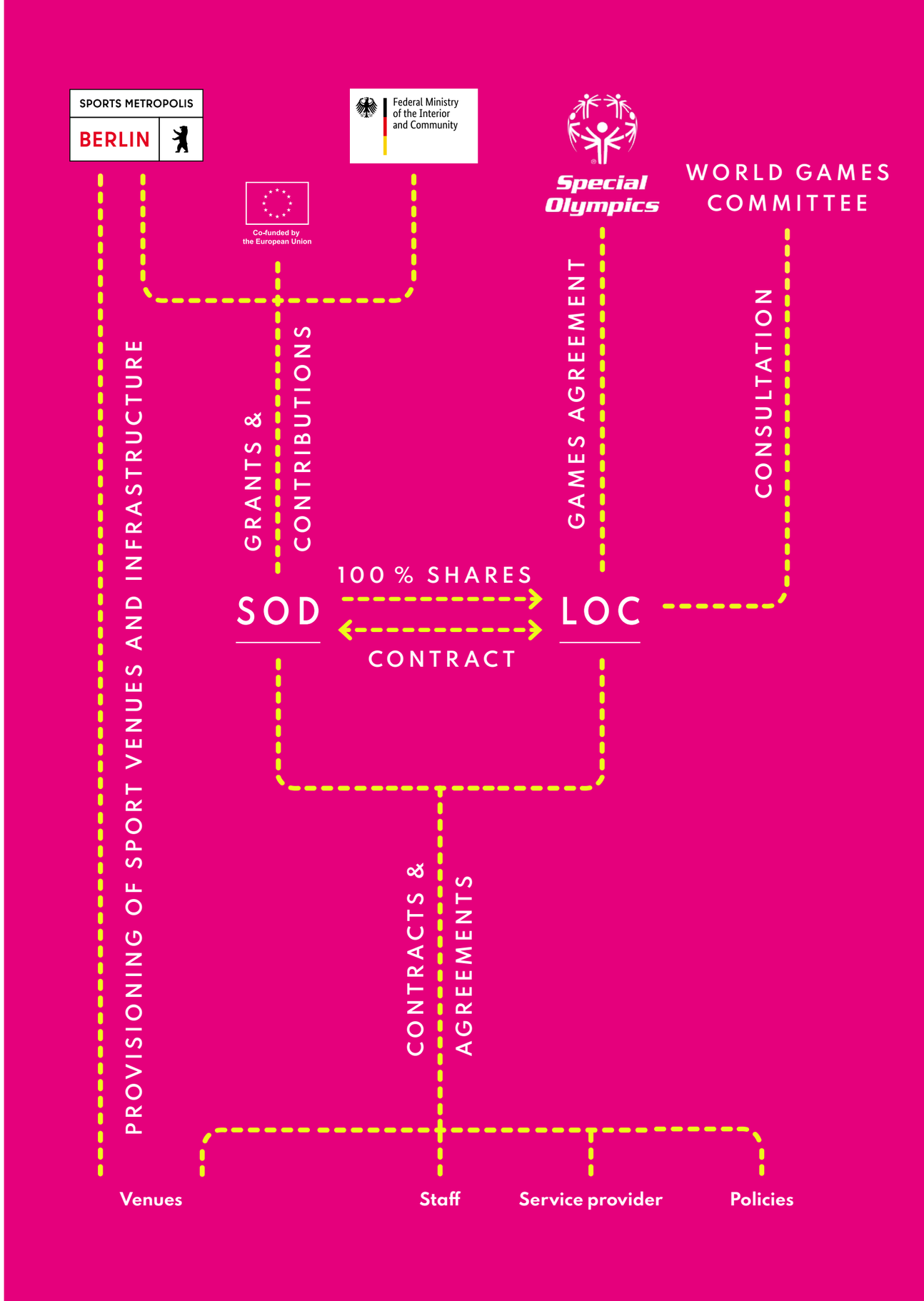
Close communication to ensure the flow of information and the consideration of interests took place primarily at the working level through the **Steering group,** which met regularly, and the "Finance and Personnel" subgroup. Both formats met approximately every six weeks to discuss and coordinate the basic processes and strategies of the LOC with the federal and state governments. In addition to the organizational units created for the World Games, the respective federal and state department heads regularly attended these meetings. Both groups were of great value to the LOC in regularly monitoring the conformity of the LOC's processes with the joint funding guidelines.

Additional working groups were established for specific topics such as event execution, sustainability and marketing/communication.

In addition, the political partners exerted their influence on the organization of the Games through the World Games Committee. The federal government was represented on the World Games Committee by the Federal Minister of the Interior, the Federal Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, **the Federal Government Commissioner for Disabled Persons** and the respective chairmen of the Sports Committee of the German Bundestag. At the state level, the Governing Mayor, the Senator for the Interior and Sports, the State Commissioner for People with Disabilities and the Chair of the Sports Committee of the Berlin House of Representatives were the representatives of the Berlin Senate on the World Games Committee. In addition, the President of the German Association of Cities and the Chairman of the Conference of Ministers and Senators responsible for Sports were represented on the World Games Committee.

The Sports Committee of the German Bundestag (Parliament) and the Sports Committee of the Berlin House of Representatives regularly addressed the World Games. Support for the Games also came from the circle of state ministers of sports via the Conference of Ministers of Sports, the Conference of Ministers of Culture and the Conference of Ministers of the Interior. The Federal Chancellery, the Office of the Federal President and the Senate Chancellery of the State of Berlin were regularly informed about the plans for the World Games in personal meetings and supported the goals of the event.

And Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier agreed to serve as the patron of the Games. In summary, the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin received bi-partisan support at all political levels. Without this continued support, the success of the World Games would not have been possible. Following the Games, it is now up to the political partners to translate the overwhelming success of the summer of 2023 into sustainable structural changes and improvements in the lives of people with intellectual and multiple disabilities in Germany (see also chapter 7).



3.5 SPONSORS

In preparation for the National Games 2022 in Berlin and especially the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023, the LOC addressed the topic of sponsorship/partner acquisition early on. The long-term goal was to find partners for the World Games Berlin 2023 and beyond who would further support and enrich the Special Olympics movement through their commitment.

Rights Categorization and Rights Packaging
For actual implementation, the first step was to categorize and differentiate all rights and opportunities for potential partners. The explicit categorization of opportunities allowed the LOC to subsequently create a specific classification into rights packages, specifying which partner would be entitled to which rights based on their investment. In this initial rights package, potential partners/sponsors were categorized as “Gold,” “Silver” and “Bronze” partners in consultation with SOI. With these basics in place, preparations for corporate outreach could begin.

Preparatory Measures for Market Outreach
An essential part of the preparation was the creation of the first meaningful sales materials for market outreach. Market standards and materials such as presentations were used as a reference to provide potential partners with a comprehensive picture of the upcoming multisport events (National Games 2022, Special Olympics World Games 2023). The work was closely coordinated and done with experienced people from different market segments, especially from the sports market. After completion of the materials, the market was surveyed for potential companies, in addition to the existing partner companies of SOG and SOI, namely Coca-Cola, Toyota, ABB and Würth. This was done in accordance with SOI’s guidelines for the World Games, which, among other things, exclude partners/sponsors from the tobacco, alcohol and gambling industries. As a result, numerous potential partner companies were approached through various sales channels and inquiries were processed.

Cooperation with the Sports Marketing Agency SPORTFIVE
In order to ensure the best possible planning and implementation of the marketing of the Special Olympics World Games, the LOC decided early on to work with an international sports marketing agency.

The sports marketing agency SPORTFIVE, one of Europe’s leading and internationally most recognized agencies in this segment, was selected as the partner after a bidding process. Since then, SPORTFIVE has supported the LOC and SOG in the planning, identification and management of powerful sponsors/partners. The ongoing partnership included the development of the marketing strategy, the search for sponsors and the implementation of the partnerships. The first step was to closely discuss and collaborate on the development of a “go-to-market” strategy paper. The goal of the strategy and sales planning, which was designed for the period between 2021 and 2025, was to maximize the revenue potential for the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 and Special Olympics Germany through a mix of cash and/or budget-relieving in-kind contributions (benefits in kind) and/or pre-agreed marketing in-kind contributions (“Go-To-Market: ©SPORTFIVE).

A systematic sales approach was chosen to ensure compliance with the go-to-market plans. The timeline, based on waves leading up to the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 and beyond, focused on adhering to the brands’ usual budgeting cycles, the Berlin 2023 Master Plan, the expected recovery of the Covid-19 industry, the hosting of the National Games in June 2022, and maintaining basic flexibility and responsiveness to adapt to changing market trends and business interests. At this stage, a thorough analysis of the total addressable market was essential. Factors considered in the selection of potential World Games partners included Commonwealth & Olympic Games Partner brands, Paralympic & Special Olympics sponsors, Berlin-based sponsors: sports clubs (football, handball, basketball, volleyball) & local events/festivals, brands with a recognized commitment to diversity & inclusion with budgets in Germany, brands provided by functional areas of the LOC, and other brands of strategic relevance such as major Berlin-based corporations and corporate foundations in Germany. Sectors and brands with connections to key event delivery/operational requirements were also integrated as outreach targets in this approach. Following this analysis, the brands were prioritized and preparations were made to approach potential partners.

Also integrated into the planning, and critical to the success of the target parameters, was the planning and implementation of B2B advertising activities based on the strategic planning for the World Games, set milestones and the B2C communication plan for the World Games, which was implemented prior to the initial brands outreach. In the latter communication plan, the World Games were promoted through regional and national large-scale advertising campaigns. From a sponsorship perspective, one of the goals of this plan was to create early awareness of the World Games and the Special Olympics movement.

Project teams from the LOC, SOG, SOI and SPORTFIVE then worked to achieve the ambitious goals and to implement the commercial strategy and meet the revenue target.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
BERLIN 2023

WITH FUNDING FROM

Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community

SPORTS METROPOLIS BERLIN

Co-funded by the European Union

Aktion Mensch

PREMIUM PARTNERS

Coca-Cola · REWE · T · TOYOTA

PARTNERS

AfB social & green IT · airbnb · Freshfields · Nike · RIEDEL · s.Oliver · Bahn Berlin · schufa · Warner Music Central Europe · WÜRTH

SUPPORTERS

ABB · ALBA · ALVERO · AON · APA Brands Events Solutions · BER Flughafen Berlin Brandenburg · BGW · Bolt · BRIGHTSPOT · Butterfly · BVB.NET · BEX Charter · VIPBUS Connection · CURACON · DHL · EDok · ELEIKO · EVACO · Gallagher · HANSEMONDIAL · Henkel · INTERHA · Kieback&Peter · KRONOS · Laureus Sport for Good · NIVEA SUN · OTIS · P&G · rosterfy · sanofi · SPIETH Gymnastics · sportradar · SYNLAWN · polytan · tpthub · unzer · vivenu · WIZ TEAM · WW · zalando

GLOBAL BROADCAST PARTNER

ESPN

MEDIA ALLIANCE

ARD · Bild · DAZN · Meta · prime · ProSiebenSat.1 Media SE · RTL · sky · sport1 · MAGENTA TV · ZDF

MEDIA PARTNERS

104.6 RTL Berlins Hitradio · Berliner Morgenpost · rbb · Spreeradio · star fm · Tagesspiegel · Wall

3.6 SPORT INSTITUTIONS

Intensification of the cooperation between Special Olympics Germany and national sports associations was also achieved through the organization of the Special Olympics World Games 2023. During the extensive preparation process, cooperation agreements were reached with almost all **national associations** for the sports offered. The agreements provide for cooperation in the following areas: sports and sports development, events and competitions, educational opportunities and public relations. In addition, specific cooperation agreements with the respective associations are possible, including additional aspects such as youth work. The basic aim of cooperation is to improve access to mainstream sports for people with intellectual disabilities and to jointly create the necessary conditions, for example in the area of coach training.

The SOG has **cooperation agreements** with the following national associations:

- Bund Deutscher Radfahrer (German Cycling Association)
- Bundesverband Deutscher Kraftdreikämpfer (German Powerlifting Association)
- Deutscher Badminton-Verband (German Badminton Association)
- Deutscher Basketball Bund (German Basketball Association)
- Deutscher Boccia-, Boule- und Pétanque-Verband (German Boccia, Boule and Pétanque Association)
- Deutscher Golf Verband (German Golf Association)
- Deutscher Handball-Bund (German Handball Association)
- Deutscher Hockey-Bund (German Hockey Association)
- Deutscher Judo-Bund (German Judo Association)
- Deutscher Kanu-Verband (German Canoeing Association)
- Deutscher Kegler- und Bowlingbund (German Bowling Association)
- Deutscher Rollsport und Inline-Verband (German Roller Sports and Inline Association)
- Deutscher Schwimm-Verband (German Swimming Association)
- Deutscher Segler-Verband (German Sailing Association)
- Deutscher Tennis Bund (German Tennis Association)
- Deutscher Tischtennis-Bund (German Table Tennis Association)
- Deutscher Turner-Bund (German Gymnastics Federation)
- Deutscher Volleyball-Verband (German Volleyball Association)

The sustainability and further regionalization of this successful cooperation between Special Olympics Germany and the sports associations of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 is an important goal.

3.7 VOLUNTEERS

The National Games, the World Games, and the entire Special Olympics movement owe their success to dedicated volunteers. Without their support, neither the National Games nor the World Games would have been possible. They were involved in all areas and roles: as helpful and enthusiastic greeters when delegations and guests arrived, as motivators at the finish line, as attentive listeners for the athletes, but most of all as multipliers for inclusion. The willingness of all the volunteers to go above and beyond the call of duty made a special contribution to active social inclusion. With nearly **2,000 people at the National Games** and **18,000 people from 126 countries at the World Games,** volunteers were the

largest group of unpaid assistants. Whether young or old, with or without a disability, from the region, the country or beyond Germany's borders, they all had one thing in common: their enthusiasm for meeting athletes and participants from all over the world and their commitment to inclusion. The willingness to support the movement was overwhelming (see also chapter 5.12).

National and International Volunteers – a Pool of Knowledge for Organizing Sports Competitions

Since the founding of Special Olympics Germany (1991), sports development and the organization of sports competitions have been organized and supported by a large number of volunteers. Today, Special Olympics Germany has a **network of more than 250 volunteer working group members** in the current 32 official competitive sports at the national level. These are supplemented by volunteers at the regional level in the Special Olympics Regional Associations.

For Special Olympics Germany, it was clear from the very beginning of the bidding process that national expertise should and must be included in the organization of the competitions. Previous international Special Olympics events had not seen such intensive involvement of national sports expertise. Special Olympics Germany, in extensive discussions with the international federation, Special Olympics International, developed a structure and understanding of roles for the area of sports and competitions that included both international participation (e.g., through Technical Delegates), national expertise (e.g., Special Olympics Germany volunteers in sports as competition managers), and national governing bodies (e.g., Assistant Technical Delegates and referees/judges, among others).
This "triad" formed the basis for the successful implementation of the competitions at the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023.

More than 1,000 regional, national and international **volunteers** – from Special Olympics and the sports associations – worked hand in hand to provide the **best possible competition experience** for the athletes. This organizational structure in the area of sports & competitions has laid a successful foundation for future World Games, and we believe that future LOCs of the Special Olympics World Games should build upon and develop this structure.

3.8 OTHER PARTNERS

In addition to the aforementioned sponsors, volunteers, and broad political support, many other institutions and organizations were crucial to the success of the World Games.

- As the official marketing agency of the City of Berlin, **VisitBerlin** supported the World Games in many ways
  - — through its extensive marketing activities. In cooperation with its subsidiary Stand und Land Reisen, hotel and travel offers were made available to self-paying groups such as families, volunteers and honorary guests.
  - — Tourist offers were made available to guests at discounted rates.
  - — Inclusion and practical ideas regarding accessibility were brought into the networks by visitBerlin.
- Such an extensive **cultural and social program** for the World Games would not have been possible without the great willingness of cultural institutions, groups and artists. Special mention should be made of the cooperation with **Kulturprojekte Berlin GmbH** and the integration of the World Games into the Berlin Cultural Summer.
It is also worth mentioning that the worldwide music event **Fête de la Musique** was part of both the National Games and the World Games during the competition days. The stages and venues were made available to the Fête de la Musique on these days, with exciting, musically inclusive program points.
- Without the experience of experts in the field of **transportation** and mobility, many concepts in this area would not have been successful.
Berlin-Brandenburg Airport did a great deal to give visitors arriving in Berlin a positive first impression of the city and the region, and did an impressive job of organizing the collective departure of guests.
The partners in the **Berlin-Brandenburg Transport Authority,** especially the **Berlin Transport Authority** and the **S-Bahn Berlin,** ensured the smooth mobility of all participants and guests of the World Games, in addition to a shuttle service.
- At this point, the support of the many involved **authorities** and agencies for order, safety and security must be emphasized and praised.
These included the **Berlin Fire Department,** the **Berlin Police Department** (led by Unit 2), the **Federal Police**, the **Berlin Traffic Management Authority,** the Senate Department for Mobility, Transportation, Climate Protection and the Environment, which is responsible for noise permits, and the regulatory and permitting authorities of the **Berlin districts,** especially Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf, Mitte and Treptow-Köpenick, and many others.
- In the **State Sports Association of Berlin** (Landessportbund Berlin), the World Games had a reliable, close and creative partner to raise awareness and create an inclusive family sports festival around the Brandenburg Gate as the highlight of the Games.
- Special Olympics and education go hand in hand. The **Ministry of Education,** schools and educational institutions were important supporters of school projects, a school sports week and as the largest group within the "Fans in the Stands" fan project.
- In addition to sponsorship activities, the business community was represented by a trusted partnership with the Berlin Merchants and Industrialists Association **(VBKI)** and the Berlin Chamber of Industry and Commerce **(IHK).**
- The **competition venues** have been mentioned several times in this report. However, **Messe Berlin** (Exhibition Center), the **Olympic Park,** the **Swimming and Diving Hall in the Europasportpark** (Europe Sports Park) and many other competition venues, whether operated by the district, state or privately, have always been selfless partners and supporters.
- The support of two foundations deserves special mention:
  - — The **German Foundation for Volunteering and Engagement** (Deutsche Stiftung für Ehrenamt und Engagement) provided extensive support for innovative measures and approaches in the area of volunteering at the World Games.
  - — **Aktion Mensch,** a long-time supporter of the Special Olympics movement, was particularly instrumental in making the Games possible.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

NATIONALE SPIELE

BERLIN 2022

2024

4.1 BACKGROUND

The Special Olympics National Games Berlin 2022 were an important milestone on the way to the World Games and took place from June 19–24, 2022. 3,685 national athletes from all Regional Associations of Special Olympics Germany and some international guest delegations celebrated a festival of encounters in the German capital and competed in 20 sports. The National Games also offered non-competitive activities and a diverse accompanying program. The National Games in Berlin were the largest National Games in the history of Special Olympics Germany and an important test run for the World Games the following year.

A major challenge was the overlap of the National Games with the "Finals 2022," the spatial and temporal bundling of the German Championships in 11 sports.

Due to time constraints in the international competition calendar of key sports, June 23–26, 2022 was set as the period for the Finals, resulting in a temporal and, above all, local overlap with the competitions of the National Games. From the perspective of the LOC and SOG, it was not possible to move the National Games to an earlier or later date.

This resulted in extensive competition schedule adjustments, venue changes and significant coordination efforts.

Normally, Special Olympics Germany organizes national summer and winter games every two years on a rotating basis. However, due to the special situation in 2022/2023, it was decided to entrust the LOC with the organization of the National Games 2022. This decision was based on the expectation that both testing and learning effects could be used more effectively and that financial benefits could be achieved through contracts with service providers for both events (2022 and 2023). Both assumptions have been confirmed in retrospect.

As is customary for Special Olympics Germany National Games, the services provided to participating delegations differed significantly from World Games standards. All national delegations were responsible for their own travel, accommodation and transportation during the Games. Only the free use of public transportation in Berlin was provided through passes issued by the LOC. However, in 2022, athletes from approximately 20 international delegations were invited to participate in the National Games. Due to the direct and indirect effects of the coronavirus pandemic, a total of 13 international guest delegations with 138 athletes and 19 unified partners eventually traveled to Berlin. They received services similar to those of the World Games and were centrally accommodated at the ParkInn Hotel at Alexanderplatz, which also served as the delegation hotel during the World Games.

International delegations:

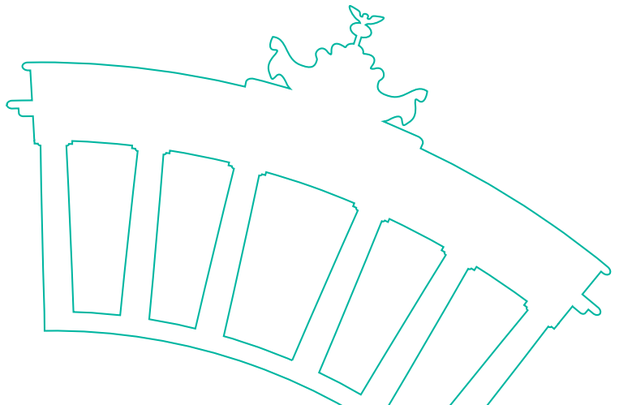
SO BELGIUM
SO DENMARK
SO HUNGARY
SO IRELAND
SO ITALY
SO KOREA
SO NETHERLANDS
SO NORWAY
SO POLAND
SO SLOVAKIA
SO SPAIN
SO UNITED KINGDOM
SO USA

Preparations and Challenges

In the preparation process for the World Games, the constellation described above resulted in much of the LOC focusing on planning for the National Games 2022 from the beginning of 2022 on, after previously working on the World Games 2023. This also resulted in a vacation ban for all LOC staff from April 4 to June 30. At the end of April 2022, a readiness exercise was conducted with the entire LOC to review the planning status of all areas. For this purpose, a fictitious athlete was accompanied on a journey to the National Games in Berlin, and the functional areas were asked to outline their approach in various situations during this journey. The entire month of June was designated as Games Time. Due to the very high workload between Easter and July 2022 – intensified in many areas by the coordination efforts with the Finals – all employees were encouraged to reduce overtime and take days off in the following weeks, so that the planning for the World Games could begin in full as of fall 2022.

The coronavirus pandemic had a significant impact on the planning and implementation of the National Games. International delegations had to cancel their participation due to travel restrictions and strict vaccination requirements. Collaboration and integration of teams on site in Berlin was only possible for the LOC and SOG a few weeks before the event and under certain conditions due to ongoing pandemic precautions. This had a significant impact on team building and collaboration, as internal events also took place under defined conditions (fully vaccinated or recovered and adhering to hygiene guidelines).

The unpredictable evolution of the pandemic and the associated national and international regulations for large events and travel, especially considering the participants as one of the risk groups during the pandemic, led to additional efforts in the preparation and implementation of the National Games. The LOC, in collaboration with SOG and the relevant coronavirus working groups, and subsequently with SOI, developed a comprehensive pandemic protocol that defined all requirements and guidelines. Participation in the National Games was only possible for those who were fully vaccinated or had recovered, which applied to all participating groups. This entailed a high administrative workload (communication and control). In addition, preventive measures were planned and implemented, including special hygiene requirements, distribution of N95 masks and test kits. A testing station was also set up in the Olympic Park. During the National Games themselves, additional administrative efforts were required to record and track positive coronavirus cases and to implement measures to isolate infected individuals.



General Schedule and Event Schedule

The 13 international guest delegations arrived in Berlin on Friday, June 17, followed by the 371 participating delegations from Germany on Saturday, June 18.
The festive Opening Ceremony took place on June 19 at Alte Försterei, the home stadium of the Bundesliga soccer club Union Berlin, before the sports competitions began on June 20. Due to a scheduling conflict with the "Finals," the swimming competitions started one day earlier.

The National Games offered not only sports competitions, but also many other program highlights, all of which served as a relevant trial run for the World Games. From receptions, press conferences and an observer program to traditional Special Olympics programs, the schedule of events was diverse and colorful!

Torch Relay: The traditional torch relay was organized prior to the National Games to symbolically carry the Special Olympics message from across the country to Berlin. The Regional Association Special Olympics Bremen kicked off the relay at the mouth of the Weser River. On the inclusive tour along the coast, a total of 60 athletes and participants followed the route to Bürgermeister-Smit-Gedächtniskirche in downtown Bremerhaven. Five more torch relays from the Special Olympics Regional Associations of North Rhine-Westphalia, Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Saxony-Anhalt and Berlin followed. On June 18, the torches from all over Germany arrived for the Special Olympics Festival at the Neptune Fountain and were united in front of the Red City Hall. The flame was ceremonially lit at the Opening Ceremony on June 19 at the An der Alten Försterei stadium, officially kicking off the Special Olympics National Games 2022.

Healthy Athletes®: The world's largest health program focused on the needs of people with intellectual disabilities, offering all seven disciplines over six days at the Maifeld in the Olympic Park. Athletes could be screened daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except on June 24, the day of the Closing Ceremony, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.).

Opening Ceremony: The Special Olympics National Games officially opened on June 19 in Köpenick, Germany, at An der Alten Försterei stadium. More than 11,000 athletes, families and spectators celebrated this moment together. One of the highlights was the musical program with various (inclusive) Berlin bands and the main act, MiA. The athletes danced with joy; and even before the official opening, a long procession, with all the delegations, was formed.

Unified Sports Experience (WBFA): The non-competitive offerings were an integral part of the Special Olympics events. Participation was open to everyone and offered a challenge for every level of ability. Over the course of seven days, participants were able to experience success through exercise and fun at 16 stations at August-Bier-Platz in the Olympic Park. A smaller selection of activities could also be found at the Neptune Fountain during the Special Olympics Festival.

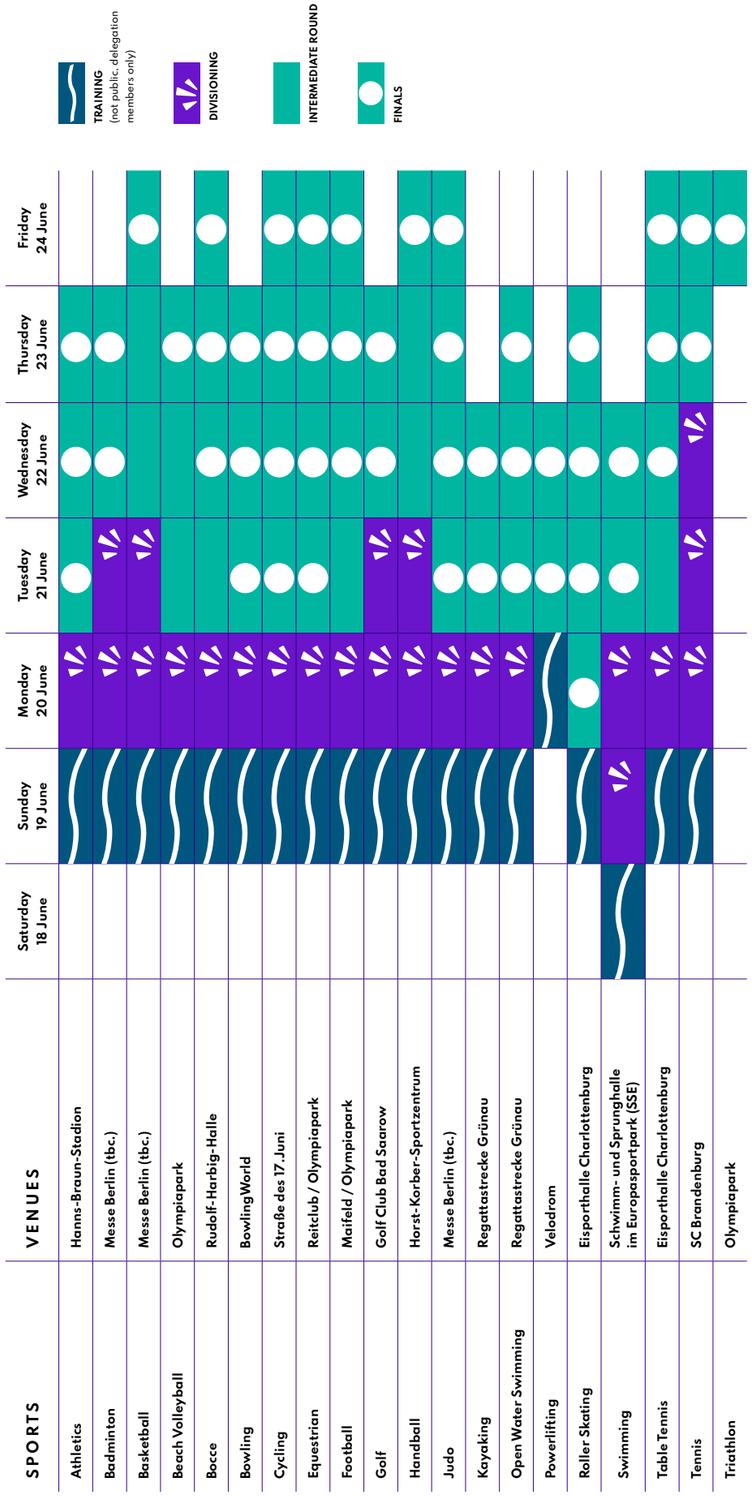
The **Special Olympics Festival,** which took place in the heart of Berlin around the Neptune Fountain from June 18 to 24, offered a colorful stage program, a variety of interactive activities and many other inclusive highlights. More than 450 participants on stage, 21 exhibitors and five workshops made the festival a place where inclusion could be experienced by all.

Cultural Program: The cultural program, which took place from June 18–24, offered cultural highlights away from the sports venues. In cooperation with numerous cultural institutions, there were various exhibitions, theatrical performances, musical presentations and other programs during the National Games.

TIMETABLE: OVERVIEW ALL SPORTS

Berlin, 19 — 24 June 2022

SPECIAL OLYMPICS NATIONALE SPIELE BERLIN 2022

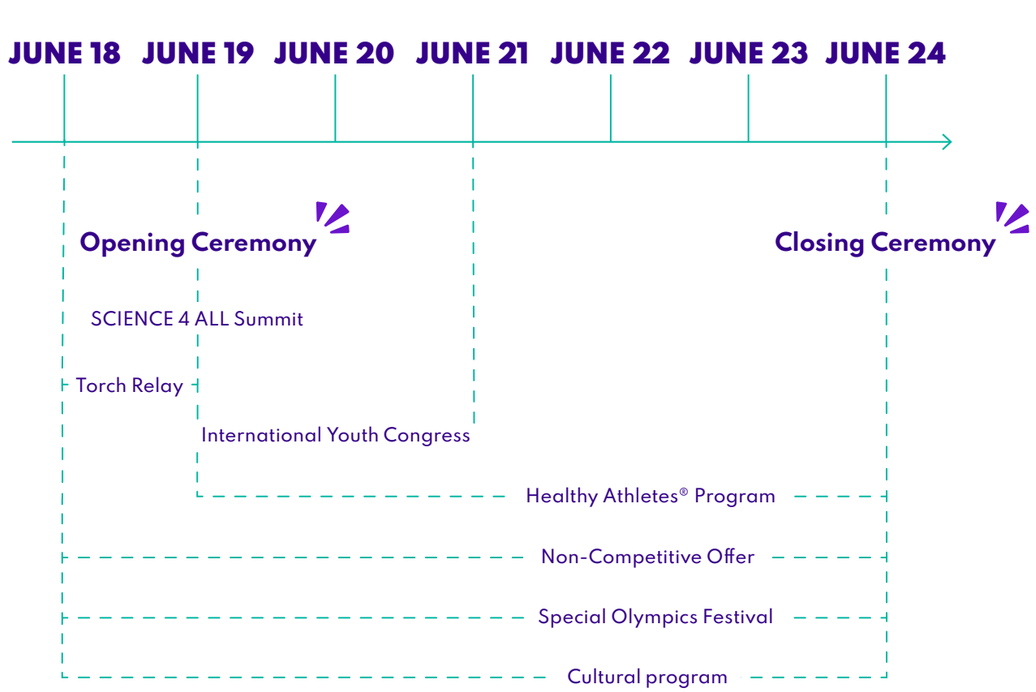


SPORTS	VENUES
Athletics	Hanns-Braun-Stadion
Badminton	Messe Berlin (tbc.)
Basketball	Messe Berlin (tbc.)
Beach Volleyball	Olympiapark
Bocce	Rudolf-Harbig-Halle
Bowling	BowlingWorld
Cycling	Straße des 17. Juni
Equestrian	Reitclub / Olympiapark
Football	Maifeld / Olympiapark
Golf	Golf Club Bad Saarow
Handball	Horst-Korber-Sportzentrum
Judo	Messe Berlin (tbc.)
Kayaking	Regattastrecke Grünau
Open Water Swimming	Regattastrecke Grünau
Powerlifting	Velodrom
Roller Skating	Eisporthalle Charlottenburg
Swimming	Schwimm- und Sprunghalle im Europasportpark (SSE)
Table Tennis	Eisporthalle Charlottenburg
Tennis	SC Brandenburg
Triathlon	Olympiapark

Congresses: The National Games also put science and education into practice, as demonstrated by the organization of two congresses: the SCIENCE 4 ALL SUMMIT and the International Youth Congress.

- The one-day science congress **"SCIENCE 4 ALL SUMMIT"** was held at the Olympic Park and brought together (young) scientists, students and inclusive research teams to raise awareness about Special Olympics and inclusion in sport.
- The **International Youth Congres**s brought 15 youth delegations from the Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia region to Berlin. Youth leaders received training and tools to create social and inclusive projects in their communities and schools. At the same time, adult mentors shared ideas on how to encourage and empower the next generation of youth leaders.

The **Closing Ceremony** took place on June 24 at the Brandenburg Gate. An inclusive DJ collective, live music, performances and a colorful fireworks display transformed the area in front of the Brandenburg Gate into one big party zone where athletes celebrated



Sports: Venues and Competitions

A total of 20 sports were contested at the National Games. Compared to the program of the World Games 2023, the following sports did not have competitions: 3x3 basketball, futsal, artistic gymnastics, hockey, rhythmic gymnastics, sailing and volleyball. Triathlon competitions were included in the program of the Finals for the National Games 2022, but were not included in the competition calendar of the World Games 2023.

As much as possible, the same venues were chosen for testing as would be used for the World Games 2023. However, for economic and capacity reasons, this was not possible for all sports and accompanying programs.
Unlike a year later, the Opening Ceremony in 2022 was not held at the Berlin Olympic Stadium, but at Alte Försterei. In addition, the Berlin Exhibition Center (Messe Berlin) was chosen as the venue for only three sports: badminton, basketball and judo. The other sports that were originally planned for the Exhibition Center in 2023, as well as the beach volleyball competitions that took place at BeachMitte in 2023, were moved to the Olympic Park in 2022. The powerlifting competition was held at the Velodrom.

Sports National Games

- Athletics
- Badminton
- Basketball
- Beach Volleyball
- Bocce
- Bowling
- Cycling
- Equestrian/ Vaulting
- Football
- Golf
- Handball
- Judo
- Kayaking
- Open Water Swimming
- Powerlifting
- Roller Skating
- Swimming
- Table Tennis
- Tennis
- Triathlon

Similar to the World Games 2023, tickets were sold for some of the events at the National Games 2022. The decision to sell tickets to Special Olympics events in Germany for the first time was made after careful consideration of the advantages and disadvantages. In the end, the advantages of controlled visitor management through ticket allocation, the recognition of the performances offered as a result of charging for tickets and the learning effects for the World Games were considered to outweigh the disadvantages associated with restricted access. Ticket prices were set so that they would not be a barrier for any interested and curious individuals to attend. A final recommendation on whether future National Games should also sell tickets for competitions cannot be made due to the extraordinary situation associated with the World Games.

A total of 3,685 athletes and Unified Partners participated in the six days of competition, 3,528 of whom came from the national delegations of the SOG Regional Associations. 157 international participants completed the field of starters in 14 of the 20 sports. The most popular sports were football, athletics and swimming, each with more than 500 participants. The smallest sports in the National Games program were beach volleyball and open water swimming with 29 athletes each, as well as triathlon and powerlifting with 34 and 35 participants, respectively.

Guests

During the competitions, many celebrity guests took the opportunity to experience the exhilarating atmosphere and the athletes' performances live at the competition venues.

The entire **professional football team of Hertha BSC,** together with then manager **Fredi Bobic,** ran across the Maifeld in the Olympic Park. The players took a lot of time for the enthusiastic athletes, and, as a highlight, Fredi Bobic presented the medals during the football award ceremony, which brought many smiles to the faces of the participants.

Philipp Lahm, former German national football player and member of the World Games Committee, and **Célia Šašić,** two-time European football champion and Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion for the German Football Association (DFB), also visited the athletes in the Olympic Park. Both were impressed by the atmosphere at the competitions and the athletes' performances.

Other prominent faces from the world of sports were present at the Unified Beach Volleyball finals and the award ceremony that followed. In addition to **professional beach volleyball players Nils Ehlers** and **Clemens Wickler, BR Volleys player Ruben Schott** was also present. **Berlin Senator for the Interior, Iris Spranger,** was not only a guest, but also officially opened the Special Olympics National Games Berlin 2022 in An der Alten Försterei stadium. The **Berlin Senate** and the **Mayor of Berlin at the time, Franziska Giffey,** visited the Games for several days. They were very impressed with the athletes' performances and praised the efforts of the volunteers. As part of the closing ceremony, Franziska Giffey handed over the Special Olympics flag to Thuringia, the next state to host the Special Olympics National Games 2024 in Oberhof.

4.2 THE TEST

As described in the introduction, the National Games 2022 served as an important real-world test run for all areas of the LOC. The importance of the National Games as a test run was further underscored by the fact that, due to the pandemic, many regional SOG events either did not take place as planned or did not take place at all, resulting in important testing opportunities being lost for the mostly young and inexperienced Special Olympics LOC team.

The different entry times of the teams into the project caused the lead time for the National Games to vary significantly for each functional area. For some functional areas, the National Games were very early in the planning process, while other areas were well into their preparations. In general, the testing dimensions of the divisions fell into three broad categories:

1. Providing an opportunity for stakeholders to become familiar with processes and people already established through the Special Olympics World Games.
2. Testing new approaches, methods, technologies and service providers for predefined and known processes.
3. Experimenting with completely new processes and event components.

Overview of Test Areas

For the **Legacy** division, the testing opportunities varied significantly among the different functional areas. While the Healthy Athletes® program and the International Youth Congress were able to test concrete processes on a smaller scale and at different event venues than in 2023, the testing opportunities for the Host Town program and the Global Forum were limited. Important lessons were expected to be learned in the areas of accessibility, athlete engagement and youth offerings.

In the area of **marketing and communication,** the National Games provided a good opportunity to test processes, interfaces and the impact of selected measures for all sub-areas. The branding and communication strategy, as well as the merchandising approach, were similar to those for the World Games, so the test run provided important insights. In addition, the event was expected to increase brand awareness in the population and among potential partners.

From a **media perspective,** the National Games were used to test the Main Media Center concept, albeit in a different location than the World Games 2023, and to familiarize the national media landscape with the Special Olympics movement. Due to the reduced resources available, only selective testing was conducted in **broadcasting** for the World Games. Otherwise, the National Games were used to inspect additional venues under event conditions.

For the **non-sports events team,** the National Games provided extensive testing opportunities. The concepts of the cultural program and the Special Olympics Festival were tested, as well as concrete event formats such as the Athletes' Disco and the Closing Ceremony at the Brandenburg Gate. Partnerships such as those with Fête de la Musique and other cultural institutions were to be established. On a smaller scale, the Torch Run provided insights for the World Games. The Berlin Exhibition Center (Messe), an important venue for the accompanying program at the World Games, was not available for testing, and the Olympic Stadium, the venue for the World Games Opening Ceremony, was not used in 2022. Unexpectedly and at short notice, the test of the Athletes' Parade during the Opening Ceremony in 2022 was canceled due to high temperatures, resulting in the loss of valuable insights for 2023.

From a **competition perspective,** the National Games provided an opportunity to test procedures in 19 of the 26 World Games sports. Although some sports were not scheduled to be held in the same venues a year later, most sports were able to test revised classification formats and the quality of sports equipment and surfaces. In addition to the testing of the new digitized procedures, there was a focus on training the people involved in each sport, including referees with and without Special Olympics experience, as well as service providers in various competition-related areas. The concept of Unified Sport Experiences, in which athletes with and without intellectual disabilities participate together in sports, mostly with prominent people, was also tested, as well as sports outside of competitive formats. Although the technical facilities at the National Games were well below World Games standards, it was possible to test concepts and procedures, and important lessons were learned during the award ceremonies and sports presentations.

Intensive testing was planned for the **Games Operations** division, with the expectation that valuable insights would be gained prior to the World Games. As mentioned earlier, testing opportunities for the service topics of accommodation, transportation and arrival/departure were limited to the small group of international delegations and sporadically to other participating groups. Nevertheless, it was hoped that important lessons would be learned here as well. Catering and cleaning services were tested on a scale and scope similar to the World Games.

Planning concepts, the composition of various specialties and teams, and on-site communication channels and methods were tested in regards to all aspects of the **venues and logistics.** Cooperation with the central Main Operation Center was another important area of testing. Especially in the important venue clusters of the Olympic Park, City, Grünau and SSE, all of this could already be tested at the final World Games venues. The Exhibition Center (Messe), the largest venue cluster at the World Games, was the only place that could be used to a much lesser extent in the previous year.

The **volunteer concept** for the National Games was already similar to that of the World Games in terms of needs assessment, registration and training processes, and the volunteer management system, although the recruitment, preparation and training activities were less extensive. In addition to testing all of these aspects, the National Games were also seen as a recruitment event for the World Games. It was hoped that a positive volunteer experience at the Special Olympics National Games Berlin 2022 would inevitably lead to greater awareness and interest in the volunteer program for the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023.

The areas of **safety, security and medical service** had to meet similar requirements at the National Games as at the World Games: Ensuring a safe and secure event for all participants. In addition, the National Games were already operating at a high level in terms of approval procedures and the safety and security concept. The differences in terms of safety and security were that the external impact of the event was limited to the national level, and far fewer high-level international politicians were expected to attend. In addition, 2022 did not involve international delegations with additional safety and security challenges. All this resulted in less complex safety and security requirements. In the area of medical services, the coronavirus pandemic played a significant role. It required its own testing strategy and extensive contingency plans. The biggest test for both the safety and security team and the medical team was the cooperation, processes and interfaces with the relevant authorities

and the respective service providers, B.E.S.T. Security and the medical service working group led by Johanniter Unfallhilfe.

For the **Technology** division, the 2022 National Games were an important test run on the road to the World Games. New digital solutions were applied and tested in almost all areas of event management. This started with the registration and accreditation process, extended to the mobile games app, the technical equipment of the venues, the recording of results in the competitions, and ended with the networking of all these and other collected data.

For most areas of the **Constituent Services** division, the National Games provided a good opportunity to test planned processes on a reduced scale. While the National Games were not significantly smaller than the World Games in terms of the number of participants, many services in 2022 were primarily concerned with international visiting delegations. In addition to advance communication and preparation of delegations through digital formats, the Delegation Assistant Liaison (DAL) program and communication with delegations in Berlin were tested. This included the "24-hour language hotline" and simultaneous translation of various meeting formats.

In the area of **visitor services for family members and guests of honor,** communication channels, concept elements such as award ceremonies and Unified Sports Experiences, as well as the family reception at the zoo were tested. Information booths and mobility assistance at venues were also tested. As mentioned above, the National Games 2022 were the first Special Olympics event in Germany where tickets had to be purchased for the competitions. They were therefore an important test for the acceptance of the chosen ticket and admission concept.

Finally, the National Games 2022 also tested the concept of the **Main Operation Center** as the central coordination point for the entire event. Due to the limited use of the Exhibition Center Berlin (Messe Berlin) for the National Games, a reduced version of the Main Operation Center was set up in the facilities of the Olympic Park.

Personnel and Volunteers

The National Games served as an important precursor to the World Games, as many areas were extensively tested. As a result, the scale and complexity of the organization was significantly greater than previous National Games. While the number of participants at the National Games was smaller than at the World Games, many areas were already being tested at a level similar to what would be expected at the World Games. This meant that the LOC staff had to organize two large events in a short period of time. This led to a noticeable increase in the workload of the team months before the start of the National Games. After the successful conclusion of the National Games, the staff had only a very short "breather" before resuming the organization of the World Games with high intensity a few weeks later.

The National Games 2022 were organized by a total of 164 people who were either employed by the LOC or working for the LOC as contractors at the time.

In addition to other service providers who were additionally hired for the National Games, volunteers were an indispensable element in the organization of the National Games. The need for volunteers was calculated by the functional areas to be approximately 2,200 volunteers. More than 3,000 people applied for the volunteer program, and nearly 2,500 of them were offered volunteer positions. In the end, 1,600 people showed up to handle their duties during the Games, resulting in a **no-show rate of 35%.** This caused significant staffing gaps during the event days. These gaps could only be mitigated by a good adjustment process within the teams. Service-related areas such as catering, transportation and visitor support were particularly affected by these gaps.

The international federation, SOI, had about 70 staff members on site during the National Games. In addition to an observation role, colleagues provided active support in understaffed areas.

Volunteers at the National Games:

General Volunteers: 1.561

Corporate Volunteers: 411

Key Volunteers: 181

Tandem Teams: 40

Delegation Assistant Liasions: 24

*Number excludes no-show rate

4.3 LESSONS LEARNED — KEY INSIGHTS

General Insights

The LOC viewed the Special Olympics National Games Berlin 2022 as a great opportunity to learn and test. From this perspective, the National Games were the most important milestone on the road to the World Games and proved to be invaluable for the team.

The first key insight was an ongoing conflict of interest. On the one hand, there were the testing aspects for the World Games, which meant that many of the processes for the event were being tested by SOG for the first time. This meant accepting that not everything would work perfectly from the start, while striving for standards that went far beyond the usual standards for the National Games. On the other hand, the National Games were an independent major event and a highlight in the athletic careers of the vast majority of participating SOG athletes. This conflict left little room for both sides to be satisfied.

Overall, both the high level of participant satisfaction and the tremendous lessons learned within the LOC suggest that this fine line was largely navigated correctly. It should be noted, however, that participants in some areas had to accept compromises in the quality of execution for the sake of the World Games. Examples include a complex registration process, an extensive and restrictive zoning and accreditation concept, and new classification formats.

It can also be generally noted that it became evident in many ways that the National Games, in terms of participant numbers, the number of sports, and venues, were more than **70% of the size of the World Games,** but had to manage with a fraction of the planned budget. Even the level of service for participants, which in some cases was significantly reduced, could not compensate for this. As a result, many staff members experienced unusually high levels of exhaustion during the event.

In retrospect, the coronavirus pandemic requirements and measures described at the beginning proved to be appropriate and practical. With **49 reported cases of corona** during the Games and 211 cases identified afterward, these numbers were within the expected range. There were no serious cases. However, corona-related absences of key personnel had to be filled through adjustments and last-minute restructuring.

A significant benefit of the National Games, with a subtle impact, was the development of a common understanding of the goals of the World Games for the LOC team and all other groups involved.

In addition to the more overarching lessons learned, many valuable insights were gained about the work of one or more functional areas. The most important lessons are outlined below.

Lessons Learned in Functional Areas

At many points in the implementation of the event, it became clear that the consolidation of individual functional areas at the venue level came too late and was insufficient. This was evident not only in the competitions, but also in other parts of the event, such as the Healthy Athletes® program. In addition to controversies over responsibility for subareas, it was found that the layout, distribution of space and equipment of individual areas were often not optimally tailored to the respective needs.
In addition, due to the restrictions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the National Games were the first meeting for many people who needed to interact smoothly to ensure a seamless operation. This sometimes led to coordination difficulties and, in some cases, **confusion about roles and responsibilities.** In particular, volunteers from Special Olympics Germany and the central staff of external service providers were involved too late in the design and coordination of processes.

In addition, it was painfully obvious that in most venues, the **operational and technical preparations** were not completed until the classifications or even the competitions were already underway. This was mainly due to the fact that the implementation teams for the IT equipment or the image and signage systems for the large number of sports venues were understaffed or lacked sufficiently detailed implementation planning. In addition, most venues could not afford to add an extra day of setup.

Even after all venues were equipped with the planned signage, there was much justified criticism of the **signage and directions.** Neither did the design of the signage meet accessibility standards nor was the type and quantity of signage sufficient for the sometimes complex and large venues.

The extensive **accreditation system** was new to Special Olympics events in Germany and met with little acceptance. In addition, the zoning, i.e., the division into different areas with restricted access within the venues, was perceived as too complex and confusing for the affected groups. Adequate support for the concept by service, safety and security personnel and on-site directions were lacking due to limited resources.

The **database system "SO Connect"** mandated by SOI did not allow for modern and professional data management and caused a considerable amount of avoidable additional work for the LOC.
Due to external influences, mainly related to the weather, there were regular **changes to the competition schedule.** Although a process for clear communication in such cases was coordinated in advance, it must be noted that it was only partially satisfactory and needed to be adjusted for the World Games.

Communication during the event was also less than ideal in other areas. There was no adequate digital contact list; radio communications were not uniformly structured and tested; and communication channels and responsibilities were not always clear. In addition, the tracking of incidents during the event was not as transparent as some department heads would have liked, meaning that only a small group in the Main Operation Center had a good overview of the situation at all times.

„Sometimes less is more." The National Games made it clear in many areas that even with the flagship of the World Games, and despite the size of the LOC and the resources available, only a limited number of projects, initiatives and ideas can be implemented. Especially in the areas of sustainability and non-sporting events, it became clear that the capacities within the LOC were not sufficient to pursue and implement all promising cooperation approaches with the necessary diligence.

Also in the area of **registration,** both for attendees and volunteers, it was recognized that the scope of the registration process was too large. This resulted in many volunteer registration failures and poor data quality for registered delegation members.

In addition to these areas for improvement, many selected approaches and concepts were successfully validated, as evidenced by the following selection.

The concept of **organizing the competitions** with volunteer sports working groups was generally viewed as being positive. This new structure, also for SOI, effectively combines the

long-standing expertise of volunteer experts from Special Olympics Germany with the network of German sports associations and the specific knowledge of Special Olympics International delegates.

The approach of moving competitions from closed sports facilities to open spaces was validated by the support of spectators and the media. This was true for competitions such as cycling as well as for the highlight events at the Brandenburg Gate. As expected, the Special Olympics Festival in front of the Rotes Rathaus lacked a spatial connection to the sports competitions. This concept was implemented at the World Games with the combination of the Special Olympics Festival and 3x3 basketball.

A very gratifying insight from the National Games was that visitors were generally willing to purchase tickets for Special Olympics events, thus recognizing the value of the performances. This provided important insights into the design of ticket prices and packages.

The open and **festive** concept of the **Closing Ceremony,** which differed from previous Special Olympics World Games Closing Ceremonies, was successful and validated the plans for the World Games. An absolute highlight was the Athletes' Disco in front of the Brandenburg Gate, the success of which convinced SOI to include the same approach for the first time in the program of the World Games 2023.

The use of **public transport** as an important pillar of the mobility concept was also considered a success. This approach was important to the LOC from the outset for both environmental and inclusiveness reasons. The LOC was keen to make public transport in Berlin more inclusive and to draw attention to its shortcomings. At the same time, the routes to and from the venues offered a wonderful opportunity to create encounters and let the visiting delegations experience Berlin.

The **catering concept,** the quality of the food and the participating companies were all rated very positively, which is not to be taken for granted. The chosen concept was therefore continued for the World Games.

This selection, together with the **high satisfaction ratings of the participants,** clearly shows that the LOC was on the right track for the World Games. At the same time, based on the lessons learned after the National Games, extensive adjustments were made to maximize the success of the World Games in accordance with the set goals.

Adjustments to Process in the Future

Based on the lessons learned from the National Games, both structural and workflow changes were made to the LOC in late summer of 2022. A clear goal was to focus more on the holistic planning of key event components.

The functional areas should have more influence in the decision-making process on key issues. In order to facilitate faster decision-making and to promote a broader understanding and acceptance of the decisions made, it was decided to open up significant parts of the weekly leadership team meetings to all senior managers (digitally). In addition, the LOC-wide milestone planning was completely overhauled in September 2022. Throughout the process, a focus on key issues and greater pragmatism in workflows were guiding principles. The goal was to make integrated milestone planning more relevant across the LOC, providing the team with more guidance in their day-to-day work.

It was also recognized that the use of a project management tool where all functional areas entered their project progress did not provide the expected added value and overview. Such a tool can only be beneficial if it is used diligently by all areas. A positive cost-benefit ratio was not achieved. As a result, it was decided not to continue using the tool in its existing decentralized form, but to maintain it centrally only through Program Management.

Another key lesson learned from the National Games was the perceived **understaffing** in many areas. As a result, the HR department, in close coordination with senior management, fundamentally revised the hiring plan and increased staffing in certain areas.

In particular, the **Games Operations** area was adjusted. The functional areas of Safety, Security and Medical Services were separated from the Operations division and received their own director. The remaining functional areas were divided thematically into a service-oriented focus and a venue-oriented focus. In the latter functional area, the COO was more involved in technical management due to his experience. In order to strengthen integrated planning at the venue level, staff restructuring ensured that the functional area Overlay had a much greater presence in the LOC office than before the National Games. In addition, a new body, the **Venue Steering Group,** was established to make progress with and oversee integrated venue planning. The Venue Steering Group met every two weeks from the fall of 2022 and then weekly from January 2023. It consisted of the three senior venue managers, the senior managers of Overlay and Competition Organization, the director of Games Operations, the COO, and the Program Management project leader.

An expansion of the readiness process prior to the World Games was planned in advance, and the concept was further expanded in the

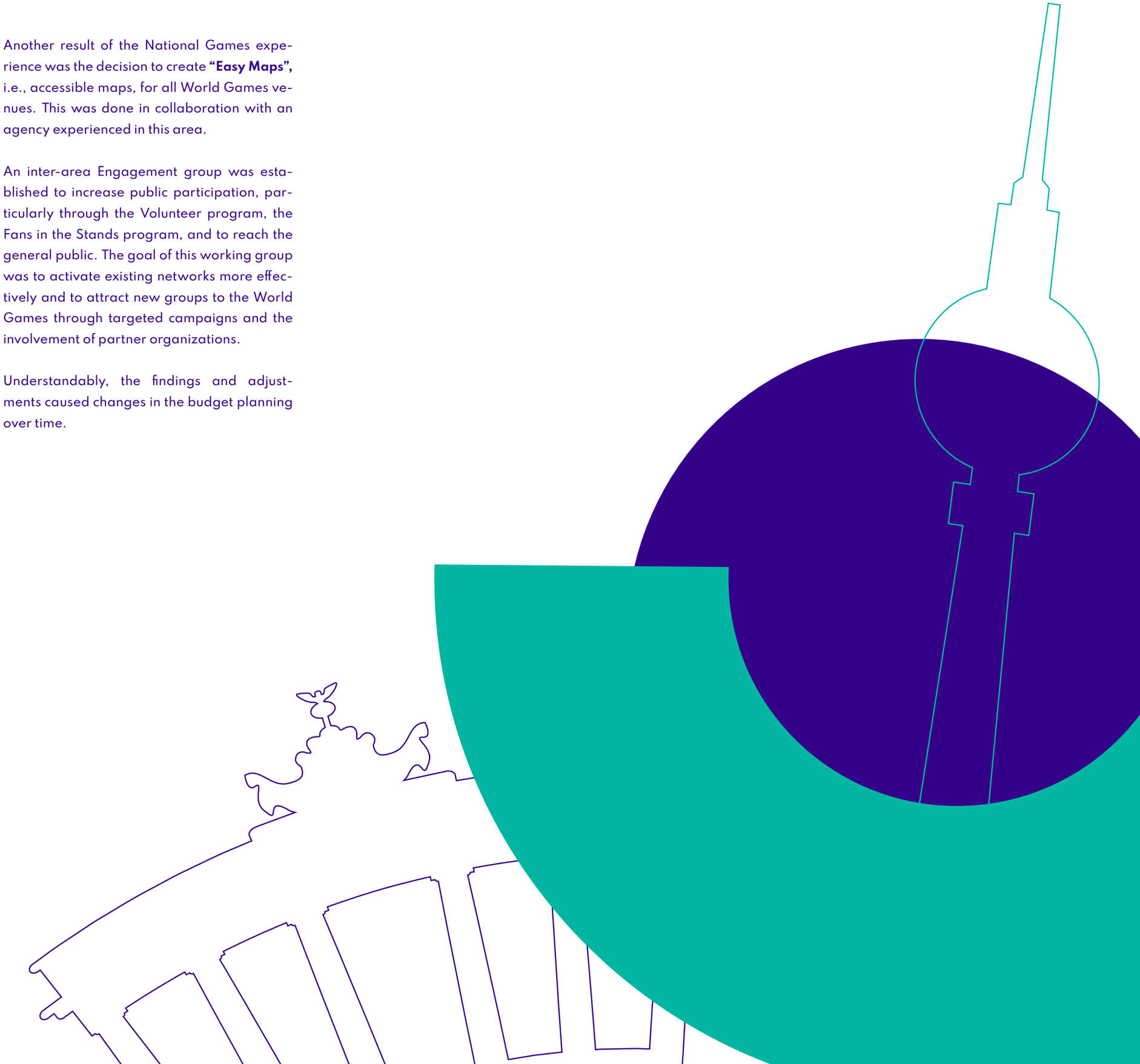
fall of 2022 based on the lessons learned from the National Games. In addition to specific readiness exercises for individual event components and services, **Venue Readiness Exercises (V-REx)** were introduced for all venues. These mostly one-day formats were to take place in Berlin in March and were intended to promote not only operational venue planning, but also acquaintance and team building among the individuals involved. The planning of the V-REx was carried out by parts of the Venue Steering Group.

The National Games clearly demonstrated that internal communication during the event was inadequate and responsibility for the issue within the LOC was not clearly defined. In order to improve these shortcomings and address this issue systematically and comprehensively, all planning, both structural and operational, was transferred to the responsibility of Program Management.

Another result of the National Games experience was the decision to create **"Easy Maps",** i.e., accessible maps, for all World Games venues. This was done in collaboration with an agency experienced in this area.

An inter-area Engagement group was established to increase public participation, particularly through the Volunteer program, the Fans in the Stands program, and to reach the general public. The goal of this working group was to activate existing networks more effectively and to attract new groups to the World Games through targeted campaigns and the involvement of partner organizations.

Understandably, the findings and adjustments caused changes in the budget planning over time.



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05

5.1 THE LAST MILE — PREPARING FOR THE WORLD GAMES

Revision of Milestones

As indicated in chapter 4.3, the intensive preparations for the World Games began seamlessly with the evaluation of the National Games. One of the first major steps was to fundamentally revise the milestone plan based on the lessons learned from the National Games. For this reason, the Program Management questioned the existing milestones in individual meetings with all heads of functional areas. As a result, the previously existing 655 milestones and over 4,500 tasks were consolidated into approximately 175 overarching, relevant milestones. Once the milestones had been defined at the functional area level, they were rearranged and synchronized across the entire Leadership Team.
In this form, the milestone plan was suitable for managing the overall process, and all employees understood it.

Based on the milestone plan, the remaining eight months were divided into four phases:

1. Establishing the framework (10/22–02/23)
2. Stakeholder preparation (02/23–04/23)
3. Completion of planning / Start of implementation (04/23–05/23)
4. Implementation phase (05/23–06/23)

Readiness Process

The so-called readiness process played a central role in the months leading up to the event. Beginning in March 2023, exercises and stress tests were conducted in various formats at many event areas. These exercises and stress tests were distributed across specific event components, venues and functional areas.

Most exercises were conducted as tabletop exercises, in which participating teams theoretically played through fictitious, previously uncommunicated situations. Typically, a person from the functional area or Program Management served as the exercise moderator. Functional areas described how they would act in the situations presented. However, there were also exercises (e.g., in the Transportation functional area) that were conducted as real exercises on site with extras (participants). In another format, some sessions were conducted as pure briefings without interaction.
The majority of the exercises involved only selected functional areas and therefore did not require the presence of large parts of the LOC. This was different for the two largest exercise formats: the venue readiness exercises in March and the **LOC-wide readiness exercise** in April.

Two major criticisms of the National Games were the inadequate involvement of key venue stakeholders in the venue planning process, and the fact that many people at the venue level did not get to know each other until the Games themselves. In order to optimize both aspects in the run-up to the World Games, the Venue Steering Group developed the **venue readiness exercises (V-REx)** format. In nearly 30 workshops, one for each sport and the major non-sports events, the respective processes at the venues were to be discussed, tested and approved in person. In addition, the key stakeholders for each venue were given the opportunity to get to know each other and their respective working methods prior to the World Games. For this reason, great importance was placed on the personal participation of the following groups of people:

- LOC: Venue Lead Team consisting of venue manager, competition manager and technical lead
- LOC: At least one representative deployed at the venue in each involved functional area (LOC)
- SOI: Technical delegates (or equivalent people for non-sports events)
- National governing body: Assistant technical delegates (or equivalent person for non-sports events; as needed)
- Volunteers: Competition manager (or equivalent person for non-sports events)
- Central service provider representatives (as needed)

Some participants traveled from North and South America and Australia.

To maximize the benefits of the exercises, proper planning was essential. Planning was to be completed far enough in advance to allow for discussions based on the final circumstances, while also leaving enough time before the event to respond to lessons learned. In order not to disrupt the preparations and to take advantage of synergies, it was decided to conduct all V-REXs in one week. During the week of March 20-24, twelve weeks before the World Games, a total of 33 venue readiness exercises took place, with up to six running in parallel. In addition to the 26 sports, sessions were held

Overview of readiness formats before World Games

on topics such as the Special Olympics Festival, Closing Ceremony, Athletes' Disco, Healthy Athletes, Opening Ceremony, Summer Garden Exhibition Center and Special Olympics Activity Zone. The content of the exercises and specific risk scenarios for each venue was prepared by a small team consisting of the venue manager, the technical lead, the person in the LOC responsible for each sport or non-sports theme, and Program Management. The individual exercises were led by Program Management staff or other individuals not operationally involved with the venues. Participation in the venue readiness exercises was viewed as valuable by all involved and the concept was considered a **success** both internally and externally. These meetings contributed significantly to improving the quality of cooperation and communication at the venues.

In April, the LOC-wide readiness exercise and the final LOC retreat were held on two consecutive days.
The LOC-wide readiness exercise involved all functional areas of the LOC as well as external representatives from the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the Senate, the medical service, the safety and security service, the Berlin fire department, the federal police and a delegation from SOI. Throughout the day, detailed risk scenarios for specific subareas and the reactions of all participants were theoretically played out, questioned, discussed and explained. Scenarios included, for example, traffic accidents involving participants, missing persons, evacuation scenarios, and weather effects. This process contributed greatly to improving mutual understanding and strengthening planned communication channels. The final "team retreat" the following day marked the beginning of the intense event phase for the entire LOC. In addition to an emotional reflection on what had been achieved and a motivating look at what was yet to come, the first concrete training measures for the World Games appeared on the agenda.

From March 13-17, the delegation heads of International Special Olympics programs were invited to Berlin for the so-called **HOD site visit.** For five days, the participants were introduced to the concept of the World Games, the procedures and the most important venues. The HOD site visit was a voluntary offer to the delegations, since this was the first time in the history of the World Games that all essential information for the delegations was provided entirely through **digital HOD seminars.** Nevertheless, 31 delegations accepted the offer and sent participants to the HOD site visit in Berlin. The concept of digital HOD seminars was a result of both pandemic restrictions and an important pillar of the LOC's Greener Games initiative to reduce international air travel. All HOD seminars were offered in different time zones and simultaneously interpreted into all six official SOI languages.

A considerable degree of inter-area planning effort went into the content design preparation as well as the production-technical preparatory work for the TV production. **Broadcasting workshops** and site visits laid the groundwork for approximately 700 hours of video coverage of the World Games.

Future Organizing Committees would be well advised to incorporate many of these measures from the outset. In particular, the extensive and multi-faceted readiness process is to be assessed positively and contributed significantly to the operational success of the World Games. The venue readiness exercises are particularly noteworthy in this regard, as they had a very positive impact.

Detailed planning of the specific roles of all staff during the event period was supposed to be handled at an early stage. In retrospect, the LOC addressed this issue too late, resulting in a great deal of uncertainty and avoidable effort.

Communication and Increased Visibility

During the evaluation of the Special Olympics National Games Berlin 2022, two additional areas were identified that required special attention by the LOC in preparation for the World Games.

One was **recruiting enough volunteers,** and the other was **increasing the number of spectators.** This assessment was shared not only by the LOC, but also by political stakeholders.

In this context, a group of LOC employees was formed into a working group called the Engagement Group. The group had two tasks: to define volunteer and spectator recruitment activities and to coordinate LOC-wide activities to avoid redundancy and friction.

The group started its work in the **late summer of 2022 with a focus on volunteering.** The following steps were initiated:

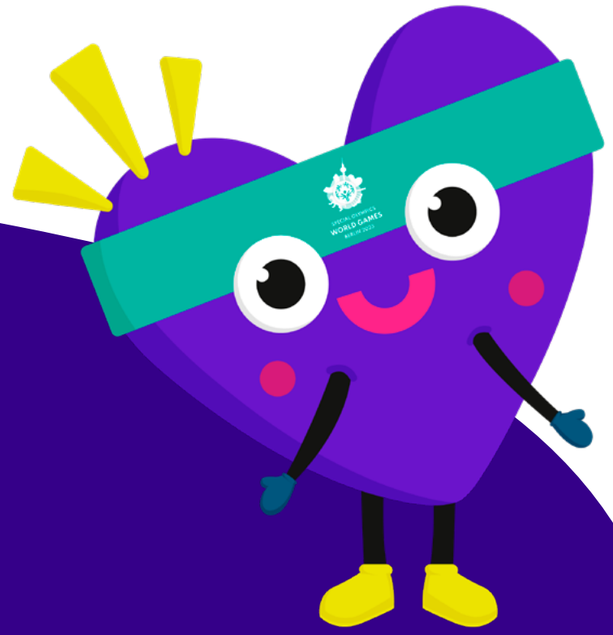
- Creation of promotional materials in various formats for distribution
- Internal inventory of existing contacts at companies and institutions that could be approached for recruitment
- Coordinated and synchronized LOC-wide promotional and outreach efforts with contacts
- Consultation with the LOC's institutional partners to inspire and release their employees for volunteer work
- Political lobbying

From **January 2023,** the **focus shifted to the issue of generating spectators** for the competitions, particularly the Opening Ceremony. As the above steps had proven successful in recruiting volunteers, a similar project outline was used to address the spectator issue. The goal was to distribute at least 50,000 tickets for the Opening Ceremony. To maintain the perceived value of the event, it was important to avoid indiscriminate distribution of free tickets. As a result, a combination of discounted tickets for eligible target groups and active outreach to existing networks led to the desired success.
In the run-up to the World Games, the focus was also on increasing awareness and visibility of the event in Berlin and Germany. In addition to a continuous increase in marketing and communication activities in areas such as outdoor advertising, digital media, social media, media partnerships and press work, several highlights were set to maximize attention for the event. Examples include the unveiling of the official World Games **mascot, "Unity"** the launch of a special postage stamp for the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 and the announcement of the **media alliance.**

At major sports events, a **mascot** is a must. So it was with great excitement that "Unity," the mascot of the World Games, was introduced on March 16, 2023. The mascot was unveiled in the high-profile ARD-Morgenmagazin. With an average of 3.92 million viewers, ARD-MoMa went live at the Brandenburg Gate, where Unity was unveiled to the public for the first time. The unveiling was a great success, as the topic was also picked up and communicated by many other media.
The creation of the mascot stemmed from the design of the World Games logo. A workshop with athletes was used to define the elements and symbols that represented their emotions during sports. These emotions were incorporated into the mascot, and the color scheme and shape were derived from the logo. As ideas were collected, it quickly became clear that the heart was the most appropriate symbol for the event. The purpose of Unity was to symbolize togetherness, joy and excitement. Similar to the logo, the name of the mascot was created in a digital workshop with athletes from around the world. With great passion and excitement, a total of 9 athletes shared the words and emotional feelings associated with the World Games.

A special postage stamp was issued to commemorate the occasion and unveiled in partnership with the German Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF) at the Berlin Olympic Stadium on May 11, 2023.

Barely a week later, on May 16, a premiere took place in Germany with the formation of the media alliance. For the first time, **Germany's eleven largest media companies** agreed to jointly cover an event. ARD and ZDF as well as Deutsche Telekom, Meta, Prime Video, ProSiebenSat1, RTL, Sky, Sport1, Dazn and Bild joined forces in a media alliance for the world's largest integrative sports event. The value of the media alliance lay not only in the coverage of the Games themselves, but also in the weeks leading up to the event, when the partners provided the LOC with various broadcast slots to promote the event. From commercials during the Bundesliga or the DFB-Pokal final to the integration of content in entertainment formats, millions of people across Germany were reached and made aware of the World Games through this platform.



To me, the mascot means everything we stand for: inclusion, love, togetherness. We are one community, no matter where we come from. #UnbeatableTogether – Unity is all that.

Nyasha Derera,
a workshop participant and Sargent Shriver International Global Messenger from Zimbabwe

Also in May, the official **Games song, "Are You Ready",** by the Norwegian pop duo Madcon was released. Through various media collaborations and the partnership with Warner Music, this opportunity was used effectively in public, helping to emotionally charge the World Games and increase anticipation.

All of these measures contributed significantly to the high level of public interest in Berlin and Germany in the World Games in the summer of 2023.

Inter-area working groups aimed at increasing regional visibility and activating existing networks played a significant role in the high number of volunteer registrations and fans in the stands.

The Unity mascot and the media alliance are two success stories that will hopefully have a lasting impact on the Special Olympics movement in Germany. Overall, it can be seen that it is worthwhile creating highly publicized communication opportunities in a timely manner, especially for sports events that traditionally receive little or no public attention. The mascot Unity, the stamp, the Games song and the media alliance are excellent examples of this approach.

5.2 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE DURING THE EVENT

Overview

A key lesson learned from the National Games 2022 was the need for an **earlier focus on the implementation phase** and the responsible teams at each venue. This was taken into account in the planning processes starting in early 2023. With the start of the operational event phase, the LOC then finalized the orientation of its organizational structure. The staff, as well as the many contractors, service providers, volunteers and other supporters, were then organized in most cases according to the venues where they were active. In addition, the thematic networking within the respective areas continued to exist – to varying degrees from one functional area to another. Consequently, the LOC operated in a matrix structure with two dimensions: venue and functional area.

The **Main Operations Center** (MOC) served as the central organizational unit on top of the individual venues and decentralized functional areas, where all relevant information was gathered, processed and communicated back to the organization after updates. Overall event coordination was handled from the MOC, which also served as the location for event management.

At the venues, the primary responsibility rested with the venue managers. In the months leading up to the event, they formed Venue Lead Teams for each venue, combined with the responsible technical leads and sports and/or non-sports managers. Within the scope of their organizational responsibility, all people working at the respective venue were grouped together. All incidents that occurred at the venues level during the event phase were to be reported to the respective venue managers. They were encouraged to make their own decisions regarding these incidents, given there were no structural causes or potential impacts on other venues. The Main Operations Center was supposed to be solely informed of these incidents. A briefing and debriefing meeting was held at all event sites prior to the start of each event day and at the end of the event. These meetings typically saw representatives from all active areas attending that particular venue.

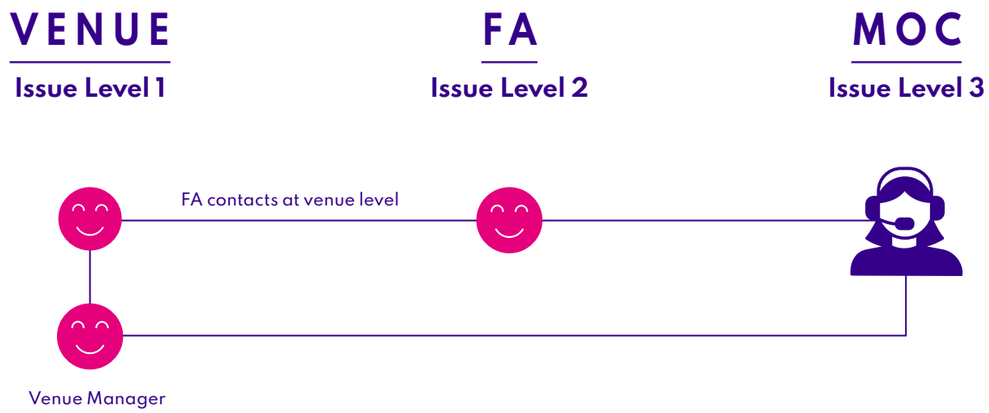
Most staff from functional areas were simultaneously connected at the technical level and linked to a Functional Command Center (FCC). This center was not necessarily tied to a fixed location, but was often consolidated with an individual who could be mobile during the event. At this level, status information and incidents that had structural causes or required structural adjustments within the functional area were reported. Here, too, the heads of functional areas were instructed to make the necessary decisions directly, when possible, and to escalate decision-making to the MOC only when the nature and impact exceeded their own competencies. The ways in which the functional areas cooperated and communicated with each other varied widely, depending on the specific needs and circumstances.

Throughout the World Games, the entire Organizing Committee operated with a “venue and functional area first” strategy, meaning that any obstacles or decisions that arose were always to be addressed first at the respective venue or in the functional area. Only if a solution could not be found at that level, or if the resolution and prevention of incidents required structural adjustments, were they supposed to be escalated for handling by the functional area managers or the MOC.

Clear lines of communication and a common understanding of the communication channels to be used were essential to the success of this strategy. For the World Games, the Organizing Committee used a mix of communication methods determined by the purpose of the communication, the group of users and the channels available. The majority of internal communications took place via mobile phones and Microsoft Teams, while the temporary trunked radio infrastructure within the venues served as the primary communication channel. In addition, all reported incidents were entered into an issue tracking tool by the venue managers, technical leads and MOC management. These groups, as well as the entire MOC Team, had also read access to this program. This greatly increased transparency and situational awareness at the event leadership level. The lack of transparent information management was a major criticism of the MOC during the National Games 2022.

Main Operations Center

During the World Games, the Main Operations Center served as the overarching event center. The operational period of the MOC started on June 9, 2023, and ended on the evening of June 27, 2023. It handled communication, control and monitoring tasks and was located **on the grounds of Exhibition Center (Messe) Berlin** during the World Games. In addition to the general technical and spatial requirements, good accessibility and a central location within the city, close connection to other central organizational units, and a secure location were decisive for the selection of the locations. All of these criteria were met in the Large Star (Großer Stern) at the Exhibition Center Berlin. The MOC was located at the heart of the largest venue, but remained easily accessible directly by vehicle without crossing paths with event participants or visitors. The **Technology Operations Center** (TOC) was located one floor above the MOC and had direct access. There was also ample space to place operationally critical functional area centers such as Transportation, Venue Management and Special Olympics International in close proximity. Im-



mediately adjacent to the MOC, separated by a lightweight wall, were the **Medical Control Center,** the Public Safety and Security Coordination Center for authorities, and the Well-being Team (see below). It's worth noting that the MOC's work focused primarily on the operational aspects of the overall event, while the Coordination Center, in conjunction with the LOC area responsible for safety, security and medical services, placed a greater emphasis on complying with public safety and security. The significant overlap between the two areas was addressed jointly by the MOC and the Coordination Center.

Based on the lessons learned by the MOC during the National Games 2022, the goal for 2023 was to reduce the number of fixed area representatives to the necessary amount, while increasing the capacity to handle inter-area incidents. This resulted in the **core MOC team for the World Games consisting of twelve individuals** or functions. However, the MOC structure allowed for thirty or more individuals to be gathered on site as needed. Prior to the World Games, several MOC workshops were held to define clear responsibilities and tasks for the entire core team.

The other directors and heads of functional areas were always accessible and could be brought in digitally or in person as needed. The presence of representatives from the international federation SOI, funding bodies and relevant authorities ensured a continuous flow of information. All of these stakeholders had the option of convening a pre-defined crisis team if the situation warranted it. Fortunately, this was not necessary.

The MOC was staffed at least during the core hours of the World Games, from 7:00 AM to 11:00 PM daily, with shifts potentially extending into the early morning hours, depending on the situation. Throughout the operational phase, the MOC hotline was available 24 hours a day. The daily MOC briefing was held at 8:00 AM each morning. The briefing lasted between fifteen and thirty minutes and included an update on the current situation and a preview of the day. Similarly, the MOC held an evening debriefing between 7:00 PM and 8:00 PM. Both briefings were conducted in a hybrid format to allow for digital participation. In addition to the MOC core team, the entire LOC leadership and other groups from SOI, the Senate and the Federal Ministry of the Interior were invited to these briefings.

At the end of each day, a report was sent from the MOC to the World Games Operations Team. The report summarized key events, staistics and incidents from the previous day, and offered insight into operational adjustments and key information for the next day. The form and content were revised after the National Games to make the report more relevant.

For the two central events, the **Opening and Closing Ceremonies,** so-called **Sub-MOCs** were set up at the two locations, the Olympic Stadium and Brandenburg Gate, **to serve as temporary control centers.** From there, all functional units directly related to these events were managed; the event management for the overall event was present, and the Coordination Center with representatives of the authorities was connected.

In retrospect, the following lessons and recommendations can be drawn from the organizational structure chosen for the World Games 2023:

- The choice of a matrix structure with the two dimensions of (1) functional areas and (2) venues was good and correct. The focus on Venue Teams was placed much earlier than before the National Games 2022. However, the overall event planning should have included a detailed consideration of the event period earlier in the planning process. This would have provided a clearer picture of venue operations and the required staffing needs and profiles at an earlier stage.
- Planning for internal team communication (communication tools and structure) during the event should not be underestimated from the start. It is recommended to clearly assign responsibility for this topic within the organizational structure and to start concrete planning and training at least one year before the event. In the case of the World Games, the transfer of responsibility to Program Management brought about the desired and necessary improvement.
- The adjustments made to the MOC concept based on the experiences at the National Games were good and succeeded. In the specific case of the World Games, it was right to have sustainability, non-sports events, business support, marketing and media included in the MOC. The composition of the core team covered the right areas, and collaboration within the MOC was very

Core MOC team

CEO (on standby) Decision making & coordination with steakholders	**Technology** Operational link, issue solving & reporting & decision support	**Competition Management** Operational link, issue solving & reporting & decision support	**Venue Operations** Operational link, issue solving & reporting	**Service Operations** Operational link, issue solving & reporting & decision support	**Head of Event / COO** Decision making & Issue delegation
Media (on standby) Link to BRC public media media & decision support	**SOI** Special Olympics International Link & decision support	**Constituent Services** Operational link, issue solving & reporting & decision support	**Program Management** MOC Mgmt, issue tracking, interface mgmt, decision support	**Program Management** MOC Mgmt, issue tracking, interface mgmt, decision support	**Head of MOC** **Dep. HoE** MOC Mgmt, temp. replacement HoE

effective. It was shown that the composition of the right team has a significant impact on the success of the MOC. For this reason, concrete recommendations for future LOCs based on the success of the World Games can only be made to a limited extent. Instead, it is suggested that the event profile be individually assessed during the design of the Main Operations Center and that the composition of the people involved be adequately considered.

- The **accumulation of incidents** directly related to delegations, rather than traditional event risks, sometimes pushed the core MOC team to its **limits.** For this reason specific to the SOWG, it is recommended that SOI, with its regional structures and long-term relationships to the delegations, be more involved, preferably in advance, in dealing with such situations.
- The daily **MOC report** is an effective means of keeping large parts of the organization informed of current issues, developments and risks. The decision to add an element of infotainment to the report increased its acceptance and relevance. This approach can be recommended to future Organizing Committees.
- The parallel structure of the central MOC and temporary event management for the central events proved effective and is recommended.

Well-being and Protection against Sexual Violence

Preventive and reactive measures to protect against sexual violence, discrimination and overwhelming or overly stressful situations were a central component and major concern of the LOC and SOI. The concept and measures were based on the well-being measures for the group of employees (see chapter 2.4 – Staff).

A broad and holistic focus was deliberately chosen for this complex issue in order to create a safe and secure environment for all groups of people involved in the World Games, including athletes, coaches, volunteers and employees.

This topic is particularly relevant as **people with intellectual, mental or physical disabilities are four times more likely to experience sexual violence than on average in the population** (cf. DGSGB, 2018). In particular, a significant number of cases remain unreported among people with intellectual disabilities, which leads to even higher incident rates (cf. BMFSFJ, 2012). This underscores the need to implement measures to protect athletes, volunteers and other individuals with intellectual or other disabilities participating in the event.

The measures included in particular:

- Establishing an **inter-divisional team** of four LOC staff members tasked with creating a policy and procedure as well as other measures and implementing them.
- **Mandatory online sexual violence prevention training** for all staff, volunteers and officials. This training was offered in both English and German and was based on existing SOI training modules that were translated into German for the first time.
- Additional training and awareness-raising for LOC staff as part of the pre-Games team retreat.
- An applicable **code of conduct** that sets clear expectations for employee and volunteer behavior.
- Sensitizing and **preventing unsupervised 1:1 situations,** including access control to all locker rooms by security personnel, locking of unused rooms and encouragement of group movement.
- Policies and guidelines regarding photography and cameras (e.g., no photography in locker rooms).
- **Background checks** for affected groups (e.g., all volunteers) **could not be implemented** due to data protection (privacy) concerns.
- Establishing a **hotline,** the so-called "Worry Number," that victims could contact **24/7 during the Games** (by phone, text message or WhatsApp). Information about this service was included in the Games Time App, the Volunteer Handbook and the Athletes Handbook. Flyers were also distributed at venues, hotels, lounges, etc. Delegation heads were informed both verbally and in writing.

In order to support individuals or groups who have experienced forms of sexual violence or discrimination, and to assist in the clarification and resolution of ongoing cases, the LOC set up a team of experts **(Well-being Team).** This team of six people volunteered during the Games and consisted of a coordinator, a sexual violence prevention expert, two sports chaplains and two psychologists. This team was available in person, by phone or by text message – for anyone experiencing sexual violence, physical/psychological violence or other mental health issues. The team could be contacted in English and German. Administrative support was provided by members of the LOC Well-being Team.

By default, the team was stationed on the exhibition grounds in close proximity to the MOC. However, the experts also moved around the venue and visited other event locations. Members of the Well-being Team wore large badges and were featured in flyers with photos. During the Games, the Well-being Team provided daily reports to the MOC.

The LOC had a zero tolerance policy for sexual violence, harassment and abuse. Immediate and decisive action was taken, including the exclusion of people from the event. Consequences were determined on a case-by-case basis after careful investigation. This multidisciplinary approach ensured a comprehensive and fair assessment of each situation, with the well-being, safety and security of all participants taking precedence. Final decisions regarding consequences for misconduct were made by the event management at the Main Operations Center in coordination with the Well-being Team. SOI was informed about incidents of sexual violence, discrimination or other forms of violence during the event and was involved where necessary. The close physical and substantive connection also proved beneficial in cases involving medical relevance (Medical Command Center) or potential criminal consequences/investigations.

Based on SOG's initial conceptual approaches, a Well-being Team was established for the first time at the National Games in Berlin. At that time, requests were relatively few and focused on issues related to feeling overwhelmed or over-stressed. However, in retrospect, the existence of the team was not widely known throughout the LOC. Lessons were learned for the World Games, and training and information were significantly increased.

The **workload** of the (larger) Well-being Team during the World Games 2023 was **much more intense.** The team dealt with a wide range of mental health issues and cases of sexual misconduct, which at times stretched the team itself to its limits.

Based on the experiences of the World Games, the following **recommendations** can be made for future events:

- The issue was **not adequately addressed within the structures of the LOC.** The issue was handled by members of the LOC Well-being Team in addition to their primary responsibilities. A "safeguarding officer" role with sufficient time resources was lacking.
- The training material available on the SOI side is comprehensive and covers the preventive aspect well. However, stronger support on the intervention level would be desirable in the future.
- The **establishment of a Well-being Team** as an intervention and response unit is strongly recommended for future events. In retrospect, the team could have been more diverse and international.
- The **involvement** and briefing of the Well-being Team started **too late,** in May 2023. A six-month lead time would have been better.
- The team's close work with the MOC, Medical Command Center and the safety and security area was viewed as positive.
- **Setting up a hotline,** which received 75% of the inquiries, and the broad communication of this contact method **proved effective.**

5.3 VENUE CONCEPT

The drafting of the venue concept was guided by several principles that the LOC had agreed upon in close coordination with the funding partners, especially the City of Berlin, in advance:

- **No new permanent sports facilities** were to be built, and existing facilities that met the requirements were to be used wherever possible. The World Games and the funding provided were supposed to be used as a catalyst to remove barriers in existing sports facilities.
- The selection of venues was supposed to allow residents of all Berlin districts to participate in the World Games **without traveling far.**
- In addition to permanent venues, the possibility of **temporary venues in public spaces** was supposed to be considered to integrate the World Games into the cityscape and make them accessible to Berlin residents.
- The distances between participants' accommodations and the venues were to be kept as short as possible.
- Single clusters – i.e., venues where only one sport was hosted – were to be avoided in the interest of maximizing spectator appeal and fostering a sense of community among participants.

These principles guided the selection of the venues for the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023.
The **Exhibition Center (Messe) Berlin** was the **largest cluster** and a center for the World Games. Together with the nearby Tennis Club SC Brandenburg e.V., the Exhibition Center hosted 10 sports. The Exhibition Center also provided a temporary home for the Healthy Athletes® program, part of the Special Olympics Festival, the Special Olympics Activity Zone (SOAZ), all congress formats, various receptions and other non-sports activities during the events. Furthermore, the Exhibition Center served as the operational headquarters of the LOC, with inter-area workplaces during the time of the event, the central logistics area and the deployment center for the event as a whole (MOC). In contrast to most of the other clusters, the majority of the Exhibition Center could not be tested during the National Games 2022.

The **Olympic Park** (Olympiapark) Berlin served as the **second largest cluster** (after the Exhibition Center), with the Olympic Stadium hosting the Opening Ceremony of the World Games. Seven sports competitions were held at the Olympic Park. The use of the Reitclub am Olympiapark e.V. allowed the equestrian athletes to be part of a larger sports cluster, which was a departure from previous World Games.

Another sports cluster was located in the heart of **downtown Berlin.** The city cluster turned the Neptune Fountain in front of Red City Hall (Rotes Rathaus) into the host venue for 3 x 3 basketball competitions, the beach volleyball facility BeachMitte, and the cycling track around Brandenburg Gate and Straße des 17. Juni. In addition to these three sports, the Neptune Fountain served as the main venue for the Special Olympics Festival, while on and in front of the large Special Olympics stage at the Brandenburg Gate were highlight events such as the Athletes' Disco and the grand Closing Ceremony.

The **Grünau Regatta Course** in southeast Berlin was the venue for the canoeing and open water swimming competitions. Other venues included the **Swimming and Diving Hall at the Europe Park** (Europapark) (SSE) in the eastern part of Berlin, **Bowling World** in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, and the facilities of the **Seglerhaus Association am Wannsee** Club in southwestern Berlin.

Bad Saarow
— Golf

Bowling World
— Bowling

City
STRASSE DES 17. JUNI
— Cycling

NEPTUNBRUNNEN
— Basketball 3×3

BEACHMITTE
— Beach Volleyball

Grünau
— Open Water Swimming
— Kayaking

Messe Berlin
— Badminton
— Basketball
— Bocce
— Judo
— Powerlifting
— Gymnastics-Rhythmic
— Tennis
— Table Tennis
— Gymnastics-Artistic
— Volleyball

Olympiapark
— Futsal
— Football
— Handball
— Field Hockey
— Athletics
— Equestrian
— Roller Skating

SSE
— Swimming

Wannsee
— Sailing

Golf competitions were the only events not hosted in Berlin. They were held in Brandenburg, specifically at the beautiful Scharmützelsee golf course of the **Bad Saarow Golf Club.**

As mentioned earlier, the accommodation concept for the participants of the World Games was closely linked to the selection of the venues. After considering various options, it was decided that participants would be housed by delegation rather than by sport. This was intended to minimize the logistical burden on the delegations and strengthen the sense of teamwork and well-being among the athletes. **Contracts were signed with 21 hotels in seven hotel clusters** to accommodate the roughly 9,000 delegation members in total. All hotel clusters for delegations were located in Berlin, The LOC concluded contracts with a total of 44 hotels in eight clusters. One cluster was in Bad Saarow and thus in Brandenburg; this was used only by the organizing team and not by the delegations.

The decision to accommodate participants by delegation and not by sport resulted in a more complex and extensive transportation concept. The goal was to provide transportation from all 21 delegation hotels to all venues. To achieve this efficiently, a **two-stage bus concept** was developed: Short shuttle rides were organized from the hotels to one of two designated bus hubs, one in the west of the city near the Hotel Berlin and the other in the east near Alexanderplatz. From these hubs, transportation was provided to all venues, including the golf course at Bad Saarow. In addition, the selected hotels were chosen to provide convenient access to **public transportation.** All participant groups were encouraged to use public transportation long before the World Games began.

This approach was driven by four central motivations:

1. to reduce environmentally harmful emissions from excessive bus use;
2. to promote exploration and discovery of Berlin by international guests;
3. to create more interaction between people with and without intellectual disabilities;
4. and to increase pressure to reduce barriers in everyday life and especially in Berlin's public transportation system.

Both bus transportation and public transportation routes were extensively supported by trained volunteers.

The **goals set in advance** were **largely achieved** with the chosen venue concept. The use of existing infrastructure and the relocation of certain sports to highly frequented public locations in Berlin worked as hoped.
Due to the specific requirements of each venue, certain sports, such as golf and bowling, had to be located outside the larger clusters.

The **use of public transportation worked well** as expected. 79% of all people involved in the Games used public transportation, demonstrating the ability of delegations and people with disabilities to organize themselves. However, due to the specific circumstances of the World Games (early start times, limited margin for delays, some remote venues), public transportation could only be considered as a complement to a functioning shuttle system.

The increased attention during the World Games and the resources made available helped to **remove many barriers** in existing sports facilities. It should be noted, however, that this was not fully achieved due to heritage preservation restrictions.

Based on the Berlin experience, it is recommended that future LOCs of the Special Olympics World Games move as many competitions as possible into busy public spaces. This not only enhances the atmosphere and athlete experience, but also creates meeting places for people with and without disabilities, even if they are not actively seeking them.

Consolidation of multiple events into clusters is desirable, even if it requires minor compromises in the quality of individual sports facilities.

It is strongly recommended that, whenever possible, **all members of a delegation be housed in the same hotel.** The positive shared experience for the delegations, the reduced effort for the Accommodation Team and Delegation Service, and the lower associated costs outweigh the increased transportation effort and, in some cases, longer travel times for the delegation members. The two-stage bus concept proved to be an effective means of keeping logistics manageable in Berlin.

If there is a well-developed public transportation network, future organizers should also consider integrating this transportation option for all participant groups.

5.4 EVENT SCHEDULE

Traditionally, the final phase of the World Games does not start at the venue in Berlin, but at the ceremonial **lighting of the Special Olympics Flame of Hope**™ in Athens on June 7, 2023. In Berlin, preparations at the venues began in early June. With the arrival of the first delegation heads in Germany on June 9, 2023, the Organization Headquarters of the World Games (MOC) also began its work, and the accompanying cultural program was opened on the weekend before the Opening Ceremony (June 10/11, 2023).

On Monday, June 12, 2023, the majority of the **delegations arrived** in Germany. However, most delegations did not travel directly to Berlin, but to their assigned **Host Towns** throughout Germany. Over the next four days, delegations spent time in over 200 municipalities in all 16 German states as part of the Host Town program. There, delegation members had the opportunity to acclimatize and get to know the people and culture of Germany. At the same time, preparations were completed at most of the sports venues in Berlin so that, for the **first time** in the history of the World Games, a **central training day** for all athletes could be offered on June 16, 2023, one day after the arrival of the delegations in Berlin (June 15, 2023).
Prior to the Opening Ceremony, the Special Olympics Festival also opened its doors at the Neptune Fountain in downtown Berlin. The **Global Forum for Inclusion** kicked off with the Berlin Evening, hosted by the Senate Department for the Interior and Sports. On Saturday (June 17, 2023), the first congress formats took place at the Exhibition Center (Messe) Berlin, and the Healthy Athletes® program welcomed the first athletes.

On Saturday evening, the moment finally arrived: The Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 were officially opened with a colorful and inspiring ceremony at the Olympic Stadium in Berlin. The German government reception was the prelude to the **opening of the Games.**

On Sunday, competitions began in almost all sports and the first medals were awarded. In addition, the **Special Olympics Activity Zone,** with various interactive activities for all visitors, generated enthusiasm and created a great atmosphere on the exhibition grounds. The sports competitions continued throughout the duration of the World Games, with the final decisions being made on Sunday morning, June 25, 2023, just before the **Closing Ceremony.**

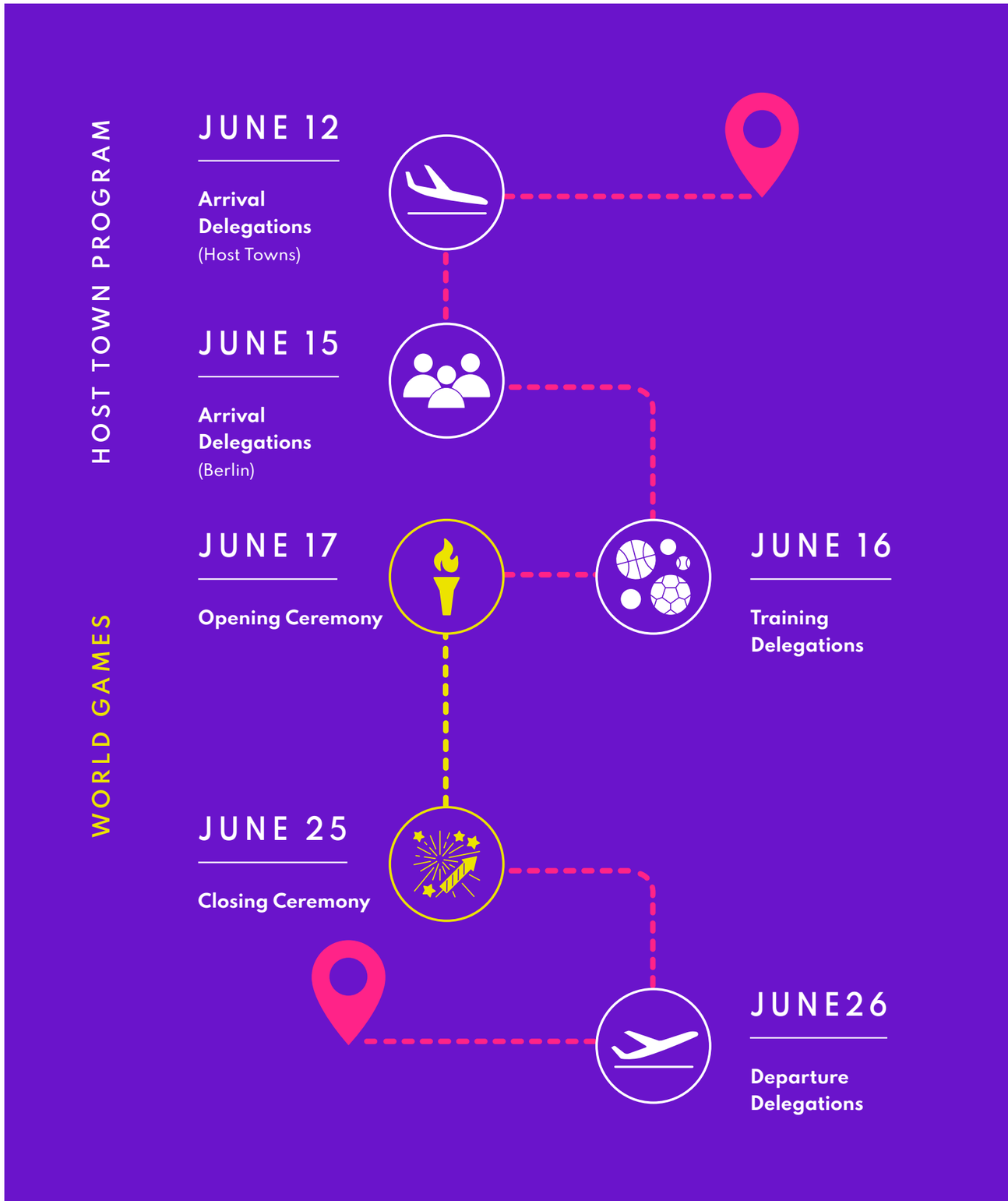
In addition to the sports program, the World Games were accompanied by many other inclusive events and activities. On the first day of competition, the **Inclusive Family Sports Festival** of the State Sports Association of Berlin took place right next to the cycling track at the Brandenburg Gate and on Straße des 17. Juni. The following day, the highlight program on the Special Olympics stage in front of the Brandenburg Gate began with a concert evening as part of the Berlin Summer of Culture.

On Monday, the Family Reception took place at Berlin Zoo, and, on Tuesday, the next musical highlights on the Special Olympics stages at the Brandenburg Gate and Neptune Fountain followed as part of the Fête de la Musique. One of the highlights of the World Games week took place on June 22, 2023, also in front of the Brandenburg Gate, when Special Olympics athletes from all over the world celebrated together at the **Athletes' Disco.**

The Grand Finale, the Closing Ceremony of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023, was celebrated as a spectacular event in front of the impressive backdrop of the Brandenburg Gate.

On June 26, 2023, after exactly two weeks in Germany, it was time for the majority of the delegations to leave for their home countries.

In Berlin, dismantling work moved forward quickly and was largely completed by June 29.



5.5 HOST TOWN PROGRAM

The Host Town program has been an integral part of the Special Olympics World Games since 1995. It is a four-day visit program that welcomes participating delegations to various municipalities in the host country, known as Host Towns, just prior to the start of the World Games. The program was established to provide athletes with time to relax after the long trip and thus provide for the best conditions for a top sports performance in the competitions. At the same time, it provided an opportunity for other cities, organizations and programs in the vicinity of the venue to participate in the World Games. The Host Town program allows host towns to share their culture with the delegations and create interactions between the athletes and the local community.

Concept and Process

The Host Town program for the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 follows the long-standing tradition of the Host Town program while introducing new and important ideas for future World Games. The concept of the 2023 Host Town program differs significantly from previous concepts in a few regards. Not only was the entire country involved in the Host Town program, but **special emphasis was placed on the sustainable impact of the project.** From the beginning, the goal was to combine the successful Host Town program with the creation of inclusive structures and networks.
From January to October 2021, municipalities from all over Germany could apply to become a Host Town and host one of the participating Special Olympics delegations. In addition to a letter of motivation and an initial program proposal, the application had to include a concept for an inclusive project that would be implemented locally over the long term. This commitment demonstrated the willingness of the municipalities to commit to long-term inclusion and participation.

The LOC is proud to have secured **224 municipalities from all sixteen German states as Host Towns.** Through the Host Town program, the concerns of people with intellectual disabilities were brought to the forefront across Germany and a beacon of inclusion was lit.

Visit of the Delegations

The Host Town program for the Special Olympics World Games took place from June 12 to June 15, 2023. During this time, **170 delegations** from **224 Host Towns** were welcomed in Germany. In many cases, several municipalities joined forces and submitted a joint bid to host a delegation.

After the bid phase ended in October 2021, the LOC, in cooperation with the Special Olympics Regional Associations and athlete representatives, reviewed the bids and selected the Host Towns. The **official designation of Host Towns** took place in January 2022, giving municipalities a year and a half to prepare for the delegations' visit. **Delegations were assigned** in May 2022.

To ensure the best possible preparation, the LOC developed various communication channels and exchange formats and assigned a dedicated contact person to each Host Town. On average, one LOC Host Town coordinator was responsible for 70 Host Towns. A handbook containing all relevant information for the operational preparation and implementation of the project was published in March 2022 as a basis for planning the Host Town program. In addition to regular newsletters and digital Q&A sessions in cooperation with the Special Olympics Regional Associations, monthly online training sessions were offered on specific topics. These training sessions covered operational issues such as accommodations, catering, transportation, security and medical care for the delegations, as well as inclusion issues such as accessibility and integration of people with (intellectual) disabilities, and an introduction to other Special Olympics projects. Prior to the Host Town program, digital readiness exercises were conducted with the Host Towns to prepare them for challenging and unforeseen situations.

To interact with the Host Towns in person, the Host Towns were invited to a workshop in Berlin as part of the Special Olympics National Games 2022. Approximately half of the Host Towns accepted the invitation to experience the National Games and network with each other. In addition, Host Town coordinators in many cases personally attended networking meetings organized by the Special Olympics Regional Associations and Host Towns, building excellent relationships with local authorities.

While the **LOC provided the framework** for the Host Town program and worked closely with the Host Towns in their preparations, the **Host Towns were given considerable flexibility in designing individual components of the program.** The LOC emphasized that each municipality had the opportunity to showcase its local characteristics and unique culture.

June 12–15, 2023 served primarily as arrival and departure days, while the Host Towns organized a diverse program of sports and cultural activities for their delegations on June 13–14. Each program was individually designed by each Host Town, allowing each delegation to forge its own unique Host Town program. In addition to training opportunities in a variety of sports, the colorful program included activities such as sightseeing tours, visits to schools and facilities for the disabled, boat trips, nature excursions, dance events, festivals, tastings of local specialties, and political receptions.
In many cases, the focus was on interaction between the delegation members and the local population. These encounters broke down barriers, formed friendships, created touching moments, and generated attention for the concerns of people with (intellectual) disabilities. The Host Town program brings together athletes, families and volunteers from around the world and has the power to inspire inclusion in a unique way.

Unfortunately, **14 delegations had to cancel their participation** in the Host Town program, some at very short notice. The affected municipalities remained official Host Towns, continued their inclusive projects, and still advocate for greater inclusion and participation.

A complete list of all Host Towns and their assigned delegations is provided in the annex.

Inclusion Day powered by Special Olympics

As part of the Host Town program, the first ever Inclusion Day powered by Special Olympics took place on June 13, 2023. It was initiated by Special Olympics Germany with a focus on enabling the World Games to have a lasting impact, and is intended to become an annual event. Inclusion Day encourages municipalities across Germany to organize events around the theme of inclusion to raise awareness.

In the context of the World Games, the LOC used Inclusion Day as an **opportunity for all Host Towns to participate in the Torch Run.** While the route of the official Torch Run, known as the LETR Torch Run, only passed through the Host Towns in the states of Berlin and Brandenburg, all other Host Towns were given the opportunity to organize local Torch Runs and keep the flame burning throughout Germany.

85 Host Towns responded to the call and organized a **Torch Run in their community** on June 13, 2023, in many cases involving the delegation, partner organizations, schools and the local population.

In addition, **43 other Host Towns** organized **alternative events,** such as sports festivals or Action Days, as part of Inclusion Day to engage the public and generate enthusiasm for inclusion and cultural exchange.

Implementing Inclusive Project Ideas

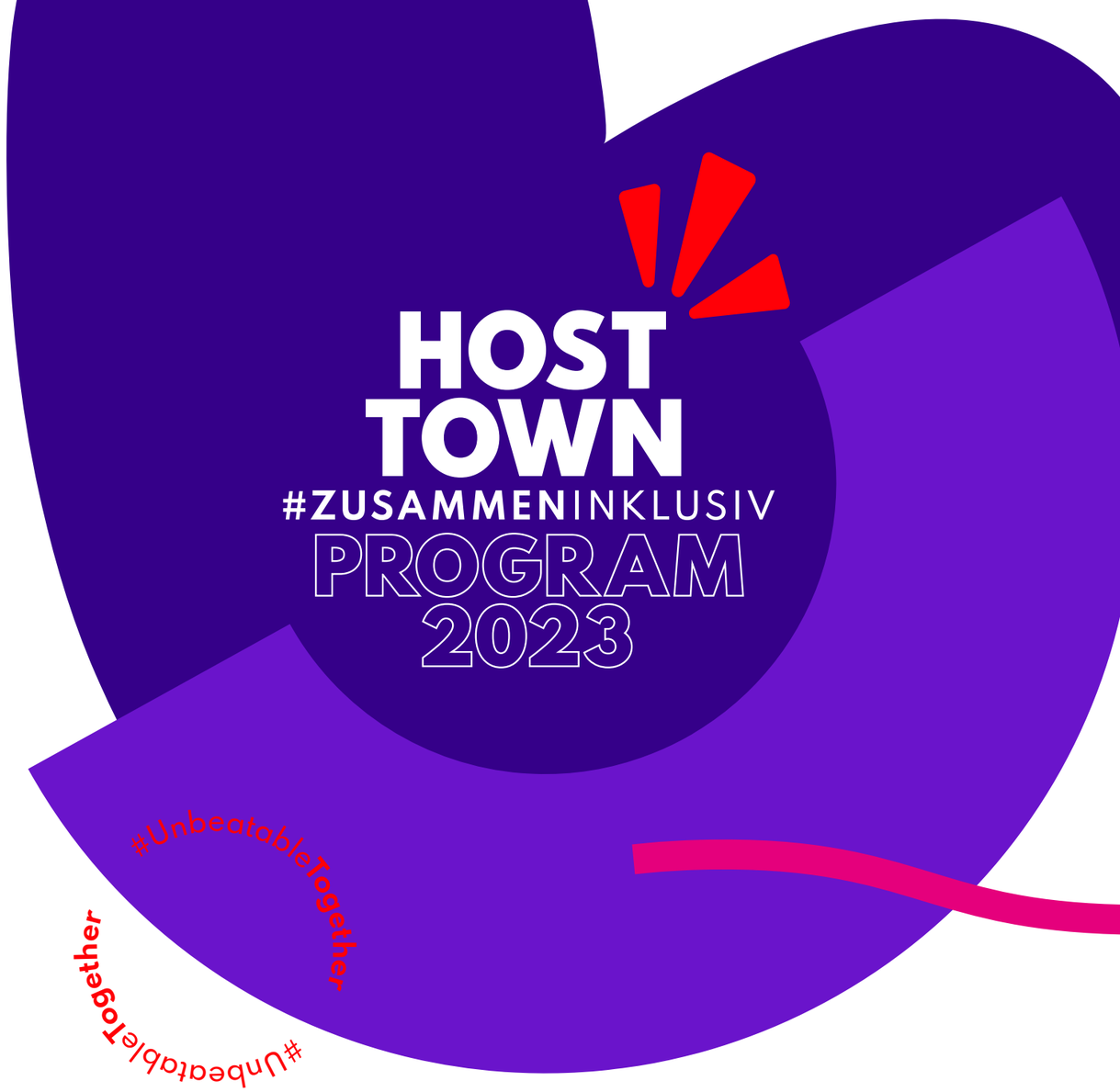
Throughout the project, the LOC worked closely with the Special Olympics Regional Associations to ensure the Host Town program had a lasting impact. While the LOC was primarily responsible for the operational planning and implementation of the Host Town program, the **Special Olympics Regional Associations were responsible for supporting the Host Towns in the implementation of their inclusive project ideas.** The LOC and the Regional Associations maintained constant communication and supported each other in fulfilling their respective roles. The goal of the Host Town program from the outset was to use the power and dynamism of the World Games and the Host Town program to sustainably strengthen inclusive structures in Germany and to establish long-term cooperation between Regional Associations and municipalities.

The Host Towns were not given any specific guidelines for the design of their inclusive projects. They had the autonomy to decide which project to implement and in which area of life. This resulted in a wide variety of different ideas. Host Towns set individual priorities and objectives in developing their conceptual idea. Several Host Towns placed their projects in the area of sports as it related to the Special Olympics World Games. For example, they aimed to create inclusive sports opportunities in their municipalities, hold regular Sports Action Days or provide coaching qualification training. In addition to sports, many also focused on education and culture. Through the Host Town program, numerous collaborations were established between municipalities and local schools to facilitate encounters between people with and without disabilities from an early age.

Many Host Towns also delved into Easy Language in order to provide more people with access to information. Project ideas related to Easy Language included expanding municipal websites, translating information boards at tourist sites, providing consultation services and organizing information events.

From the wide range of diverse projects, which included inclusive music and sports festivals, tandem partnerships between people with and without intellectual disabilities, and Encounter Days at institutions for people with disabilities, SOG hopes for positive social development and increased opportunities for participation for people with intellectual disabilities in their home municipalities.

In retrospect, it can be affirmed that the energy and advocacy invested in the concept of the Host Town program paid off, both in terms of the international federation and the national partners. **The Host Town program can be considered a significant success.** This is supported by the positive feedback from the participants. Going forward, it is recommended that the Host Town program continue to be used to connect with local organizations and achieve a broad, lasting and inclusive impact in the host country. When designing the program for delegations, it is important to ensure that participants have sufficient time to acclimatize and recover, and to avoid overloading the program.



Moretto
Moretto

5.6 TORCH RUN

The Torch Run, known as the Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR®), at Special Olympics is a long-standing tradition at the World Games. The first Torch Run was held in the USA in 1981. The LETR® was initiated by six police officers there, so there is still a strong connection today, with local law enforcement officers participating as Torchbearers (guardians of the flame) and raising funds in many countries.
The Torch Relay program for the Special Olympics World Games 2023 included three main elements:

1. Flame of Hope™ Lighting Ceremony
2. Inclusion Day Powered by Special Olympics
3. LETR® Final Leg

Prior to the official start of the Special Olympics World Games 2023, the Flame of Hope was lit by a High Priestess in a solemn ceremony at the historic Zappeion Megaron Temple in Athens, Greece on June 7, 2023. The Flame of Hope is one of the most important symbols of the World Games, representing peace, unity and hope.

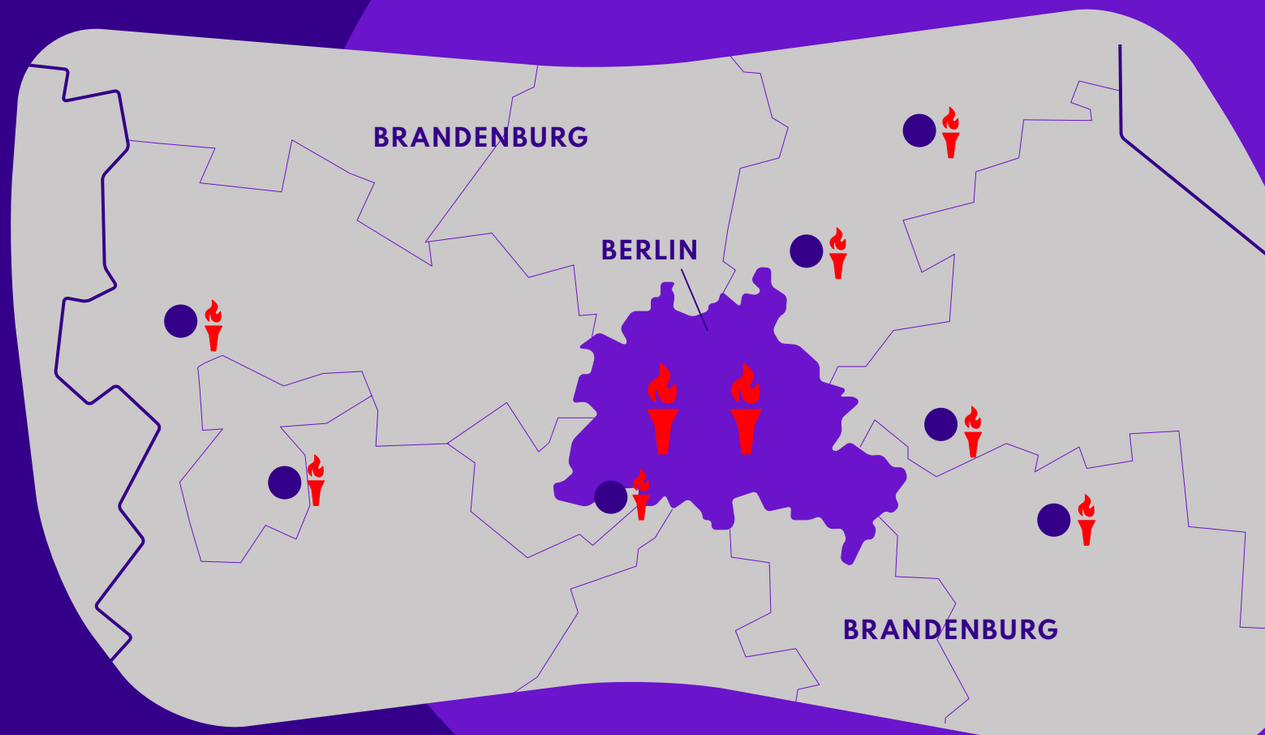
After the ceremonial lighting, the Flame of Hope was presented by the President of Greece, Katerina Sakellaropoulou, the German Ambassador to Greece, Dr. Ernst Reichel, and many other participants of the Special Olympics movement. The Flame of Hope was then handed over to Sven Albrecht (CEO of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023), Mahmut Özdemir (Parliamentary State Secretary in the Federal Ministry of the Interior) and Dr. Nicola Böcker-Giannini (State Secretary for Sports in the Senate Department for the Interior and Sports), as well as Special Olympics athletes Vassiliki Katsoudi and Natascha Wermelskirchen. Together with representatives of the Berlin police, they started the torch run through the streets of Athens to the German School.

The Flame's journey then continued to Germany, where Berlin's Senator for Sports, Iris Spranger, welcomed the delegation and the Flame of Hope™ at Berlin Brandenburg Airport.

On June 14, 2023, the official 4-day Torch Run **(LETR® Final Leg)** through the Host Towns of Brandenburg and Berlin began. During the Run, the torch was accompanied by 100 international runners, including many Special Olympics athletes and police officers. The LETR® Final Leg was a great success.

In addition to the traditional Torch Run, the **"Inclusion Day powered by Special Olympics"** initiative was launched as a supplementary program. Nearly 100 torches were carried through the streets of Germany on this day. The local Torch Runs were as diverse and varied as the municipalities themselves (see also chapter 5.5 – Host Town program).

Law Enforcement
TORCH RUN®
Final Leg
June 14 — 17



The crowning moment came when the flame of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 was carried into the Berlin Olympic Stadium during the Opening Ceremony on June 17. There it was carried by athletes in a final run around the stadium before Special Olympics Germany athlete Sophie Rensmann lit the flame in the center of the stadium.

Looking back, the chosen format of the traditional LETR program with a focus on the Berlin-Brandenburg region and the Day of Inclusion with the Flame of Hope as a shining symbol can be considered very successful. Although the coordination of this concept with the independent LETR structure, SOI and the LOC was time-consuming, it was a good solution, especially to satisfy the Host Towns' strong desire to be part of the movement.

At the time of drafting this report, there are very positive signs that the enthusiasm and broad support of the police authorities in Berlin and Brandenburg for the LETR is developing into a lasting commitment of dedicated police officers to the Special Olympics.

5.7 OPENING CEREMONY

Concept & Planning
Initial conceptual planning for the Opening Ceremony began in 2020. The Berlin **Olympic Stadium** was selected as the venue for the Opening Ceremony during the bid phase. This meant a framework with over 70,000 available seats, a place with a rich history that could not be ignored, logistical challenges for the parade of athletes and impressive architecture.

Structurally, the decision was made to outsource services to a **creation and production agency** as a package for the National and World Games, as well as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies. In contrast to previous Games, technical services (audio, video, lighting, stage) and infrastructure services were not included. Bids for these were requested separately at a later stage. The total production budget (including technology and infrastructure) for all four events was approximately €5 million.

The **Ceremonies Advisory Committee** was formed to select the agency partner and provide ongoing advice. In addition to three athlete representatives from Germany, the committee included representatives from SOI, SOG, and experts from other major events and Berlin institutions.

After a multi-stage global bidding process, the A.R.S. consortium, consisting of the two Berlin-based companies, **mediapool** and **phase 7,** was finally awarded the contract in the summer of 2021 for the artistic and production planning and implementation of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the National Games and the World Games.

Parade of Athletes
During the planning phase, there were many controversial discussions about the Parade of Delegations. The arguments for and against a parade were clear: The efforts required of the athletes, the long waiting and standing, a **significant time commitment** for all participants and spectators were voiced as reasons not to hold it. The logistical challenges of providing transportation, restrooms, catering and potential inclement weather contingencies for 9,000 people were also not to be underestimated.

However, because the parade is an important part of the Olympic Games and has always been a part of the Special Olympics World Games, and because all of the athletes and SOI were clearly in favor of the parade, the LOC decided to include the parade and accept all of the challenges and consequences that come with it. This decision proved to be the right one.

The coordinated arrival of nearly 9,000 delegation members was a major challenge. The goal was to get each delegation to the stadium on time, with arrival and waiting times before the start of the parade coordinated according to individual start times. Sufficient time was allowed for signposting, lining-up, catering and unforeseen circumstances, while avoiding unnecessary wait times (the parade was scheduled to run from 8:15 PM to 9:30 PM).

Both the transportation from the hotel to the stadium and the lining-up of the delegations for the parade and the procedures for leaving the premises went smoothly and efficiently thanks to the joint teamwork of all participants.

PARADE OF ATHLETES – PROCEDURE

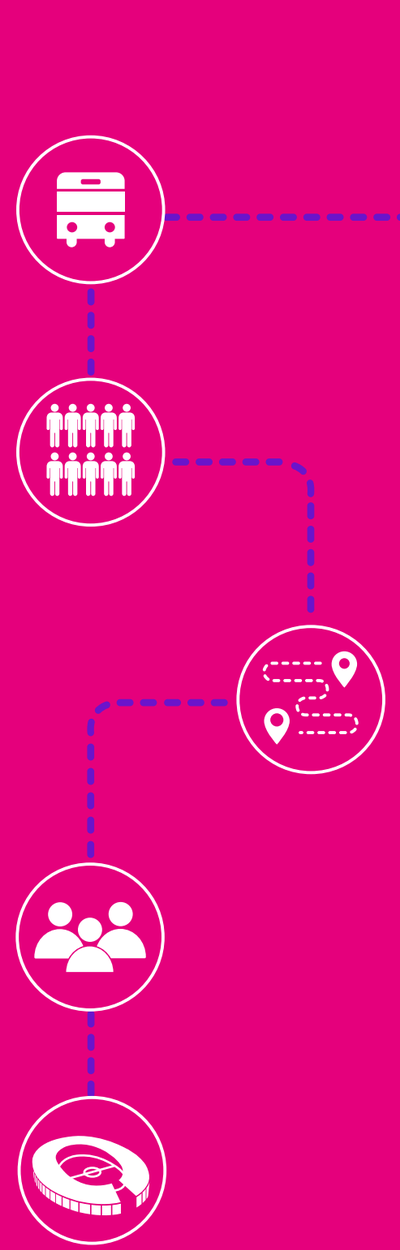
ARRIVAL
Arrival at the Maifeld and distribution to the individual waiting areas

LINE UP
Delegations **line up** in the order of the parade

WAY TO THE STADIUM
The delegations make their **way to the stadium**

STANDBY
Waiting for the appearance of the parade

PARADE
The parade moves **through the stadium**



At the beginning, the delegations entered the stadium through the **Marathon Gate,** passing through an archway created by an Israeli art collective: several oversized hands forming a heart. During the parade, the delegations were announced with off-stage commentary in German and English. Camera images showed the marching delegations on the LED screens.

The delegations felt very honored to be presented in this way, were excited and expressed their enthusiasm – there was dancing and celebrating. Some were dressed in colorful traditional costumes, which added to the vibrant atmosphere.

Each delegation was asked to bring **water** to Germany **from their homeland** in a container typical for the country. During the parade, a member of the delegation separated from his or her delegation, walked onto the stage, and poured water into the "Special Olympics River," a ring of water surrounding the stage.

The **parade lasted more than two hours,** well over the **scheduled 75 minutes.** The 45-minute delay was due to the excitement the crowd generated for the parade and the athletes: LETR participants cheered on the athletes; photos were taken; and DJ "No Shade" got everyone dancing together. The goal of the Opening Ceremony, to inspire celebration, was achieved with the parade alone. This created an incredible atmosphere in the stadium, but at the expense of time. In the future, a larger time buffer should be considered for the parade.

The Celebratory Part

The focus of the content for the Opening Ceremony was on the celebratory part itself; light and music supported it.
The **moderation** was to be entertaining, inclusive and feature celebrities. Franziska Schenk served as the anchor for the event and was joined by:

- Natalie Detreux, blogger and actress
- Felix Neureuther,
  multiple Olympic ski champion
- Mehtap Özgül, athlete representative from Rhineland-Palatinate
- Dirk Nowitzki, basketball superstar
- Hanna Joy Atkinson, SSIGM (Special Olympics International Global Messenger)

In the future, more consideration should be given to the fact that moderators or "presenters" with disabilities may need intensive support. Their performances should be prepared in advance and separate from other rehearsals. It was not sufficient for the two presenters to meet only during the dress rehearsal.
One of the goals of the Opening Ceremony was to reduce the number of words spoken both as moderation and by the **speakers.** This goal was achieved in almost all speeches.

Sign language interpretation and speech-to-text interpretation in both German and English were displayed on LED screens throughout the stadium. In addition, two mascots provided **non-verbal** support for the event and playfully assisted with the moderation.

The **flag** procession was accompanied by two prominent singers, Alexander Klaws and Sabrina Wetterlin, who performed Disney's "Go the Distance". The song was transposed for the two singers and re-recorded with an orchestra specially for the occasion. Eight flag bearers carried the flag into the stadium. A remarkable, much larger flag was hoisted under the stadium roof. ABB robots with LED screens supported the moment.

Show-Flow Opening Ceremony

TIME	DURATION	SHOWPART
18:00		Doors Open
		Welcome by Moderation
18:45	00:35:00	Federal Police Orchestra Hannover
19:20	00:05:00	Warm Up (MC Warm Upper + Mascots)
19:25	00:30:00	Mendecino
19:56	00:08:00	DTB Showteam Reverse
20:04	00:09:00	Warm Up Games Song, Choreography with Clap Banners (MC + Mascots + DTV inclusive)
20:13	00:02:00	Video Eunice Kennedy Shriver
20:15	00:01:30	Moderation and Countdown
		START OF OFFICIAL EVENT
20:18	01:40:00	**PARADE OF ATHLETES** 176 nations enter through Marathon Gate, each delegation brings water and vessel „from home“ to the water basin 2 off moderators (VOG) music: DJ collective No Shade on top of Marathon Gate
21:58	00:01:00	**ANNOUNCEMENT OF WELCOMING WORDS** through Franziska Schenk and Natalie Dredreux
21:59	00:05:00	**WELCOME THROUGH HOSTS** Christiane Krajewski, SOD Präsidentin and Vorsitzende des Weltspiele Komitees Mark Solomeyer, Vizepräsident & Athlet*innensprecher Kai Wegner, Regierender Bürgermeister Berlin Nancy Faeser, Bundesministerin des Inneren
22:04	00:07:00	**UNBEATABLE TOGETHER** Welcome to Berlin 2023 start of showpart with Blue Man Group Solo different images and videos of Germany on LEDs Jennifer Kothe, Koffi Missah, Sittin Bull on Center stage breaks‘ in music: Querplattler, Blue Man Group rikschas, Inflatable Brandenburg Gate over tartan track, Herzberg Artists, Animals from Ernst Busch / HfBK / 16 hearts on the river stage

TIME	DURATION	SHOWPART
22:12	00:05:00	**GLOBAL MESSENGERS AND SOI** representative of the Special Olympics International Global Messengers and Tim Shriver
22:17	00:04:00	**RAISING OF THE SO FLAG** Announcement of Flag Bearers through Voice of God during Showpart setting up flag carriers at east side of stadium, walking across catwalk to the north stage, 2 robots from ABB with LED-Screens opening up to flag post flag (approx 5 x 12m) is raised at north stage up to the roof of the stadium
22:21	00:06:00	**WE ARE ONE WORLD** start with poetry slam (1 min) introducing topics of pea- ce and unity, big ball looking like planet Earth held on a rope and being carried from Marathon Gate to tar- tan south to Center stagepoetry slam followed by cello and piano player on Center stage (1 min 30 sec), during cello and piano solo, 2 choirs go on Ring Stagewhen choirs start, Grupo Puja performs as central as possible above Marathon Gateend: 1 black/white ballon held by poetry slammer, 9 ballons painted like planet earth held by choir
22:28	00:01:00	**OATH OF THE OFFICIALS / COACHES / ATHLETES**
22:32	00:02:00	**OFFICIAL DECLARATION THAT GAMES ARE OPEN** President of Germany
22:34	00:07:00	**LIGHTING OF THE SO FLAME** Announcement of Torch Bearers and LETR Officers through Voice of God during Showpart „LETR officers pass torch“ images projected on screen above marathon gate while LETR officers line up on stairs last LETR Officers steps up next to screen and runs down stairs past other 109 LETR torchbearers. Pass to relay runners (7 unified couple runners in a full lap), then torch at garage across river to Center stage. Lightning via athlete – Cauldron is lifted 9m up „by water“
22:42	00:03:00	**ERIKA ENDER**
22:45	00:03:00	**MADCON MEDLEY**
	00:03:00	**GAMES SONG** stadium choreography with clap bannerssinger on Center stageTanzsportverband (500pax) enter inner circle of stadiumall artists if possibleall hearts ma- scotsInflatable Brandenburg Gate100 balloons
22:52	00:04:00	**FINALE** Blue Man Group and fireworks

Representatives from the LETR Torch Run passed **the torch** to eight torchbearers or Unified Teams from all SOI-represented continents, which circled the tartan track in stages. The runners often went beyond their designated stops with great energy and enthusiasm, making the moment even more special. The World Games Flame was positioned on the stage in the center of the stadium and rose high above the heads of the athletes in the arena after being lit. The Olympic Stadium's Flame Cauldron from the 1936 Olympics was not used and remained covered.

The Showparts

Our goal and challenge was to create an inclusive event: an atmosphere where people with and without disabilities perform together, and where their differences no longer matter to the audience.

This means that, in addition to meeting the needs in the areas of broadcast, sponsoring, partners, families and delegations, a major focus was to leave a clear footprint in terms of inclusion and participation.

We succeeded: The choreography and music were designed and tailored for the event: "Unbeatable Together" found its artistic expression in a colorful show. Berlin and Germany were presented as a diverse and vibrant society. The audience was involved in a collective choreography, using clapping banners to display the slogan "Unbeatable Together."

The performance took place on the entire tartan track. Berlin rickshaw drivers, top dancers, artists, singers, the original Schuhplattler ensemble, a shanty choir and many more entertained the entire stadium.

High above the stadium roof and the heads of the audience, the Spanish ensemble Grupa Puja put on an artistic performance, accompanied by a 50-member inclusive choir, the Nogat Singers, and the Berlin Baroque Choir on the central stage with cellist Katharina Reichelt, supported by Holger Queck.

Erika Bender then sang "Everyone Matters," a song she wrote for SOI and has performed at several SOI events.

In the finale, the Games song of the Special Olympics World Games, "Are You Ready" by Madcon, was premiered. The accompanying dance video, created by the DTV, was shared on social networks in advance, so that the entire stadium could dance along with the help of over 600 dancers from the DTV. The goal was to have a dancing stadium, and we achieved it! The Grand Finale was a spectacular fireworks display by the Blue Man Group.

Conclusions

- At the Opening Ceremony, we created the **right atmosphere** and set the tone for the rest of the Games, knowing that the Opening Ceremony would be the first point of contact for many and would influence the perception of the event.
- The ceremony was a success – it was **magical and emotional** for everyone: The show was inclusive at a very high level and featured talented artists, and our moderation successfully engaged all participants. The music was specially composed and arranged, and provided an important acoustic framework.
- The **length of time for the athletes' parade was underestimated**, leading to isolated cases of frustration and time challenges, but overall both the line-up and hotel transfers went smoothly, demonstrating great teamwork between many internal and external stakeholders. Concerns that the parade would have "dull moments" for TV broadcasts and stadium audiences did not materialize.
- **By Athletes for Athletes**: It is indisputable that this presented challenges in the de-

sign and planning stages, but the LOC was determined to involve people with intellectual disabilities in every phase of planning and execution to ensure that their visions and ideas came to life. Performers and artists with disabilities were involved in choreography and performances as equal partners, whether in an ensemble or as soloists.

- The **cooperation with the agencies mediapool and phase7** proved to be the right and **positive decision.** An impressive result was achieved with a very limited budget.
- It was also the **right decision** to consider the **National Games / Test Games as a test run** for the agencies and to separate the technical implementation from the agency bidding process.
- The establishment of the **Ceremonies Advisory Committee** was a **crucial part** of involving the athletes in the planning process and as an advisory body, especially in the agency selection process.

The intensive planning and discussions in the months leading up to the Opening Ceremony paid off! The Opening Ceremony left a footprint of inclusion for many, demonstrated what inclusive events can and should look like, and made an impression on Berlin, Germany, Europe and perhaps the world.

From the athletes' perspective, the Opening Ceremony was a great success. **85% of the athletes** rated the Opening Ceremony as **"Very good".** The experience of the ceremony ranks similarly to the personal athletic performance.

5.8 CONGRESSES

The Special Olympics World Games 2023 program included three congresses: the **Global Athlete Congress,** the **Global Youth Leadership Summit** and the **Global Forum for Inclusion** – Partnering for Action. Traditionally, the various congresses at previous Special Olympics World Games were separate events, held in different locations and at different times, with a different focus on inclusion and leadership. 2023 was the first time that the Global Athlete Congress was held as part of the World Games, rather than as a separate event. It was also the first time that a congress format was implemented in the form of the Global Forum for Inclusion. For the first time, the Special Olympics World Games 2023 implemented a 360-degree approach, bringing together participants from the Global Athletes Congress and the Global Youth Leadership Summit with government officials from around the world, leading economists, scientists, researchers and civil society representatives. This gave them the opportunity to exchange ideas and to jointly develop and discuss new ways and approaches to achieve true global inclusion.

The official slogan of the **Athletes' Congress,** "Leading Together", reflected the goal of creating a society in which people with and without intellectual and multiple disabilities, both within and outside the Special Olympics movement, are leaders in all aspects of society.

In various sessions throughout the Congress, athlete representatives from all seven Special Olympics regions further developed their leadership skills to become future leaders within Special Olympics, their communities and workplaces.

The **Global Athlete Congress** adopted the Unified Leadership approach, which uses sports to teach people without disabilities to appreciate and learn from people with intellectual and multiple disabilities. This approach aims to create an environment where people with intellectual and multiple disabilities have the opportunity to succeed in meaningful jobs and roles. After the Congress, participants returned to their home countries to further embed and live inclusion in their respective Special Olympics programs and communities. The Global Athlete Congress served as a platform for Special Olympics athletes to lead the way to a more inclusive world.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
BERLIN 2023

Global Athlete Congress
Leading Together

Global Athlete Congress

- June 15–19, 2023
- Exhibition Center (Messe), Hall 7.2
- **Participants:** 130 athlete representatives and mentors
- **Goal:** To showcase projects that participants implemented in their local Special Olympics programs.
- **Topics:**
  - Project showcasing and best practice sharing
  - Developing leadership skills
  - Highlighting ways to create a more inclusive world
  - Creating opportunities and partnerships

The **International Youth Congress,** Der Internationale Jugendkongress as it is known in German, brought together youth with and without intellectual disabilities in a unique global platform for inclusion and change. Youth representatives from over 50 Special Olympics programs were trained to lead inclusive projects with a social impact in their schools and communities.
At the same time, mentors learned from their peers around the world how to best engage and support the next generation of youth.

During the Congress, young people took collective action by presenting their own draft of the Youth Declaration to policymakers, urging them to proactively break down barriers to diversity, equality and inclusion in their countries. The impact of the Congress will be felt around the world as young people take what they have learned back to their home countries to implement inclusive projects based on their ideas.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
BERLIN 2023

Global Youth Leadership Summit
Activating Together

Global Youth Leadership Summit

- June 16–20, 2023
- Exhibition Center (Messe), Hall 7.2
- **Participants:** 215 youth leaders with and without intellectual disabilities and mentors
- **Goal:** To develop inclusive leadership structures and skills for youth
- **Topics:**
  - Youth engagement
  - Project management and sustainable development goals (SDGs)
  - Building inclusive communities
  - "Youth Declaration"

This five-day event will harness the energy, power, international diversity and spirit of the World Games to create a global movement for developing inclusive communities through youth engagement.

The **Global Forum for Inclusion** was held for the first time at the Special Olympics World Games. It facilitated a direct exchange between people with and without disabilities from different functional areas and backgrounds: government representatives from around the world, leading economists, international scientists and researchers, as well as representatives of civil society and international NGOs. Together, they developed new ways and approaches to promote inclusion at the global level.

Global Forum for Inclusion – Partnering for Action

- June 17–18, 2023
- Exhibition Center (Messe), Hall 7.2
- **Participants:** 750 participants, including GAC and GYLS participants, representatives from the political, scientific and business communities, NGOs, sports and society
- **Goal:** A 360-degree perspective on inclusion and exchange of experiences
- **Topics:**
  - Inclusive communities – access for all
  - Inclusive education
  - International cooperation and development
  - „Berliner Erklärung"

SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
BERLIN 2023

Global Forum For Inclusion
Partnering For Action

Based on the vision and mission of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023, an innovative, inclusive and interdisciplinary congress format was implemented, rooted in the goals of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: “The full and equal participation and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in society.”

The Global Forum provided a space for meetings that would not normally take place in this form. It aimed to create a better understanding of the situation of people with disabilities, which could then influence the decision-making process when it comes to improving the participation of people with disabilities in community life, or whether a special program for women and girls with disabilities is needed in the preparation of an international aid project. Special Olympics addresses the issue of inclusion by using sport as a catalyst to bring people together and raise awareness of what people with disabilities can achieve and how true inclusion can work. The Global Forum for Inclusion sought to take this a step further by emphasizing that inclusion is relevant not only in sports, but in all areas of life. Therefore, inclusion as a whole was the focus of the congress and was addressed by concentrating on three main themes: “Inclusive Communities – Access for All”, “Inclusive Education” and “International Cooperation and Development.”

In a variety of conference formats, such as lectures, discussion rounds, panel discussions and breakout sessions, best practices and new ideas for inclusive communities, inclusive education and inclusive initiatives in international development work were presented and discussed. The Global Forum brought together local and international initiatives and their representatives to address issues in sports, health, education, civic engagement and development cooperation, combined with general leadership themes.

A highlight of the Congress was the presentation of the **“Berlin Declaration”.** This includes general demands regarding inclusion and how it can be improved internationally. The signatory nations agreed to actively engage in and politically promote the advancement of people with intellectual disabilities. Anyone who finds these points worthy of support can continue to digitally sign the Declaration.

WHAT MAKES THE GLOBAL FORUM SPECIAL?

For the first time in the history of the Special Olympics World Games, the Global Forum brought together participants from the Global Athletes Congress (GAC) and the Global Youth Leadership Summit (GYLS) with national government officials, representatives from NGOs and other international organizations, and academics from around the world to discuss inclusion, share ideas about inclusion, and collaborate on ways to improve inclusion globally.

For the first time during the Special Olympics World Games, the Global Forum for Inclusion brought together decision-makers on inclusion with those affected by the decisions. During the Congress, they had the opportunity to exchange ideas, learn from the

5.9 HEALTHY ATHLETES®

Launched in 1997, the Healthy Athletes® program is at the heart of the Special Olympics inclusive sports movement. It provides all participants with the opportunity to receive free, personalized medical consultations and screenings. In addition to improving athletic performance, the health program uses Easy Language and personalized information materials to make the examination and counseling of athletes by trained medical and dental professionals accessible to participants.

This additional service is needed because of the significant health disparities that still exist today between people with and without intellectual disabilities. As a result of structural inequalities, people with intellectual disabilities are at higher risk from additional health conditions and often have poorer health outcomes in many areas.

The Healthy Athletes® program has five specific goals in particular:

1. Increase health awareness and competency among athletes (by helping athletes independently assess their individual health, communicate about their individual health, and identify health risks)
2. Improve access to health care
3. Provide education, training and awareness to (dental) health professionals
4. Initiate political processes to improve health care for people with intellectual disabilities
5. Improve scientific data on the health situation of people with intellectual disabilities

During the World Games, a total of 15,351 Healthy Athletes® screenings and consultations were conducted over eight days. The number of volunteers in the Healthy Athletes® area was remarkable, as the program would not have been possible without the 1,800 volunteers, about 80% of whom had a professional (dental) medical background. Athletes were able to receive screenings and consultations in seven health disciplines: Fit Feet, FUNfitness, Health Promotion, Healthy Hearing, Opening Eyes®, Special Smiles® and Strong Minds.

Fit Feet – The Podiatry Program

The focus of the Fit Feet discipline is to promote foot health. This includes evaluating participants' feet for foot deformities and related misalignments, skin changes, and footwear. It also educates athletes on how to prevent foot and skin problems. For foot and skin problems that cannot be treated on site, interdisciplinary treatment recommendations are provided.

Among 2,415 participants, the following statistics were observed:

- 45.6% had foot deformities.
- 49.4% had gait abnormalities.
- 89.4% had nail and skin lesions on their feet.

FUNfitness – The Physical Therapy Program

The FUNfitness discipline focuses on physical fitness. The goal is to advise athletes on various aspects of physical health and work with them to improve their individual training routines. The primary goals are to improve physical strength and endurance, as well as flexibility and balance.

Of 1,610 participants:

- 26.2% were recommended for physical therapy;
- 22.5% had balance problems;
- 55.1% had flexibility problems.

Health Promotion – The Health and Nutrition Counseling Program

The Health Promotion discipline focuses on promoting healthy lifestyles. The goal is to provide information and guidance on healthy eating, the dangers of smoking, and sun protection. In addition, blood pressure and weight checks are offered and proper hand washing is practiced. The goal is to raise awareness of healthy lifestyles and empower participants to integrate them into their daily lives independently and responsibly.

Of 1,862 participants:

- 46.1% had elevated blood pressure;
- 32.5% consumed sugar-sweetened beverages daily;
- 26.4% were overweight and 20.9% were obese.

Healthy Hearing – The Hearing Program

The focus of the Healthy Hearing discipline is to improve hearing. In addition to ear exams, hearing tests are performed and information is provided about potential ear and hearing problems. Individual hearing aids are fitted as needed.

Of 2,255 participants:

- 226 were subsequently fitted with hearing aids;
- 46.1% had partial or complete ear canal obstruction;
- 20.4% reported ear pain.

Special Olympics Lions Clubs International Foundation Opening Eyes® – The Vision Program

Visual acuity is the focus of the Opening Eyes® discipline. The goal of the Opening Eyes® program is to provide qualified vision screenings and, if the screenings are unsuccessful, free prescription eyeglasses, sports eyeglasses or sunglasses. By providing quality care with custom-made eyeglasses, people with intellectual disabilities can better perceive and understand their environment and participate in sports activities.

Of 2,938 participants:

- 1,507 individuals received a new pair of glasses;
- 22.9% had never had an eye exam;
- 23.4% had a visual impairment;

Special Smiles® – The Dental and Oral Health Program

The dental component of Special Smiles® focuses on dental and oral health. Special Smiles® helps all athletes improve their oral health. Under the guidance of dental professionals, proper dental care is practiced and information about oral diseases is provided. In addition, non-invasive dental screenings are performed and further treatment recommendations are made as needed.

Of 2,419 participants:

- 44.2% had untreated dental cavities;
- 37.8% had evidence of gum abnormalities;
- 13% reported mouth pain.

Strong Minds – The Mental Well-Being Program

The core of the Strong Minds discipline is to strengthen the mental resilience and well-being of participants. The goal is to increase competence and resilience in dealing with everyday and psychological stress. Athletes learn to recognize and counteract stressful situations. They practice techniques to cope with unpleasant or stressful situations and learn how to positively influence their actions and thoughts, as well as improve their motivation and self-efficacy.

Of the 1,861 participants, 33.5% reported not using any coping strategies.

5.10 THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS FESTIVAL

The term “Special Olympics Festival” encompassed a variety of additional programs and cultural formats, the largest of which are described below.

Cultural Program

The cultural program was part of the social program and offered a wide range of activities for all internal groups of participants, including delegations, volunteers, family members and guests of honor, as well as for the general public in Berlin.

The kick-off event for the World Games cultural program was the Special Olympics Portrait Project, a photo portrait project in cooperation with the Humboldt Forum. The cultural program ran from June 10 to 25 and included a wide range of performances and inclusive cultural offerings by various artists, collectives and institutions. Over 30 institutions offered more than 120 activities during the 16 days. There was something for everyone, from theatrical performances to guided tours, museum offerings and musical highlights. For most of the activities, accreditation was required to receive discounts or free admission.

The overall goal of the cultural program was to raise awareness about inclusion in the cultural sector. The cultural program aimed to draw attention to existing inclusive cultural offerings and institutions in Berlin, inspire the initiation of new inclusive projects, and promote networking for the future.

Future LOCs are advised to start planning cultural accompaniment early, as lead times for museums or theaters can be very long. It’s also important to consider that World Games participants have a tight schedule during the event and may not have much time to participate in a cultural program.

The experience in Berlin showed that while there are many inclusive offerings in the cultural scene, there is often a lack of networking and synergy. The Special Olympics World Games offer a unique opportunity to do just that.

Special Olympics Festival at Neptune Fountain and the Summer Garden

Participants and visitors could enjoy numerous Special Olympics Festival activities in the midst of the World Game’s largest sports cluster, the Exhibition Center (Messe) Berlin. From June 18 to 25, the Summer Garden of the Exhibition Center Berlin offered a varied program with more than 30 different interactive activities and stands. Access to the festival was possible with a ticket or accreditation.

Just like the National Games, the Special Olympics Festival in the heart of Berlin at the Neptune Fountain invited everyone to a colorful, public and inclusive celebration from June 15 to 25. The festival included a daily stage program and booths with interactive offers, exhibitors and partners. In total, more than 50 exhibitors, partners and workshop providers participated in the Special Olympics Festival at the Neptune Fountain. Right next to the Special Olympics Festival, the athletes were cheered on during the official 3x3 basketball competitions. The festival was open daily from 2:00 PM to 10:00 PM, with the exception of June 17, 22, and 25, when it closed at 7:00 PM due to the Opening and Closing Ceremonies and the athletes’ party. Admission to the festival was free.

A challenge for the festival planning was that the partner acquisition had to take place at a time when intensive event communication had not yet begun and partners had to be convinced.

Festival at Neptune Fountain June, 15–25

- Cultural stage
- Workshops
- Exhibitor & Partner booths
- Street Food
- Activities

\+ 3x3 Basketball

Festival in Sommergarten June, 18–25

- Exhibitor & Partner booths
- Workshops
- Activities
- Street Food

\+ Competitions in different sports & Award Ceremonies

Festival Highlight Events at Brandenburg Gate

June 18 Family Sports Festival
June 19 Concert Evening
June 21 Fête de la Musique
June 22 Athletes’ Party

\+ Cycling Competitions

Cultural program in Berlin June, 10–25

- Inclusive offers in cultural institutions within the city, eg.,
- Theatre performances
- Museum tours
- Exhibitions
- Music

Moving part of the festival to the city center to reach additional target groups was a good decision, as seen at the National Games. The combination with the 3x3 basketball competitions increased the appeal even more. The combination of competition and festival in the center of a host city is also recommended for future organizers.

Furthermore, it is recommended that they develop a separate communication strategy for the SO Festival and not just to announce it as an accompanying program at the World Games.

Highlight events at Brandenburg Gate

At the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin's most famous landmark, participants and visitors were treated to a diverse and varied program consisting of four highlight events.

The highlight events at the Brandenburg Gate were designed to reach not only a sports audience, but also other target groups. To achieve this, networks with the existing loyal audiences of other established events in Berlin were used to initiate collaborations and increase awareness of the Special Olympics movement and the World Games.

The biggest highlight for the athletes was the "Athletes' Party – A Celebration of Lived Inclusion." This exclusive party provided an opportunity for athletes and other participant groups to celebrate together and create lasting memories off the field.

Not only was the party itself a positive example of real and lived inclusion, but inclusion was practiced from the planning phase. Athletes' ideas and feedback were incorporated in the planning phase and integrated into the concept – By Athletes for Athletes. Even the song selection for one of the DJ sets came from the delegations.

The Athletes' Disco also served as a useful dress rehearsal for the Closing Ceremony, which took place just three days later under similar conditions at the Brandenburg Gate. This allowed for the successful testing and subsequent optimization of procedures and measures, particularly in the area of access control.

The concept of the Athletes' Disco, already established at the National Games in Germany, is to become a permanent feature of the Special Olympics World Games program.

HIGHLIGHT EVENTS

Family sports festival: On June 18, the Family Sports Festival – Inclusion through Sports and Culture – offered all visitors the opportunity to experience the full range of sports through interactive activities. The Family Sports Festival was held in cooperation with the State Sports Association of Berlin.

Concert Evening: On June 19, as part of the 2023 Summer of Culture, a concert evening brought together inclusive and non-inclusive musicians to perform at the highest artistic level.

Fête de la Musique: On Wednesday, June 21, the large stage at the Brandenburg Gate was also dedicated to music. The cooperation with Fête de la Musique strengthened and expanded inclusion in the cultural sector, and the summer was ushered in with them in a fantastic atmosphere.

Athletes' Party – Celebration of Lived Inclusion: For the first time at the Special Olympics World Games, there was a special opportunity to come together and celebrate. In front of the impressive backdrop of the Brandenburg Gate on June 22, DJs set the mood and encouraged athletes and volunteers to dance.

While the Family Sports Festival, the concert evening and Fête de la Musique were public events, the Athletes' Party was open only to accredited delegation members and selected accredited groups.

5.11 SPORTS OFFERS & COMPETITIONS

The competition program of the Special Olympics World Games 2023 included 26 sports, with hockey being added to the Special Olympics World Games program for the first time as a demonstration sport, at the initiative of the LOC.

In addition to the competitive offers, there were other sports events under the umbrella of the World Games.

Many sports included Special Olympics Unified Sports Experiences (USE), which brought together Special Olympics athletes, professional and Olympic athletes, dignitaries, celebrities and sponsors to participate in sports together. The goal of these events was to showcase the abilities of Special Olympics athletes, highlight the power of inclusive competition and raise awareness for Special Olympics.

Another sports offer traditionally found at the World Games for people with severe physical and intellectual disabilities was the Motor Activity Training Program (MATP). However, since this program was not established in Special Olympics Germany, required extensive staff training, and Special Olympics Germany already had a program called the non-competitive sports offer for this target group, the LOC and SOI (Special Olympics International) jointly decided not to offer a separate Motor Activity Training program in Berlin. Instead, in the interest of sustainable resource use, the non-competitive sports offer was expanded and strengthened. To further develop the MATP on an international level, a training program for the MATP was organized during the World Games.

Established by Special Olympics Germany, the non-competitive sports offer is aimed at people with and without disabilities, promoting accessible sports participation and encouraging interaction and shared sports activities between people from different backgrounds.

During the World Games 2023, the non-competitive sports offer, along with offers specifically designed for younger participants called Young Athletes and Unified Generation, were combined under the umbrella of the Special Olympics Activity Zone (SOAZ). The SOAZ was located in a hall of the Exhibition Center (Messe) and parts of the adjacent Summer Garden. The response to the various offers was overwhelming, and the daily awards ceremonies for all participants were a special highlight. Together with the Special Olympics Festival and the vibrant program and awards ceremonies on stage in the Summer Garden, the SOAZ formed the emotional center of the World Games Exhibition Center cluster.

The atmosphere was euphoric and the award ceremonies were emotional, not only in the program accompanying the sports events. With the stated goal of honoring and showcasing the athletes and their achievements in a dignified setting, the World Games placed a strong emphasis on professional sports presentation. Experienced moderators and DJs were hired for all sports, and large LED screens were used in many venues to display results, provide additional commentary and enhance the overall staging. The atmosphere in the halls and on the courts and fields demonstrated that the concepts developed were successful.

It is recommended to future hosting organizations that they continue on the path of professional staging of sports competitions. The measures taken improved the experience for both participants and spectators. The fantastic atmosphere at the competition venues was effectively communicated through media coverage and social media posts by spectators, which in turn increased interest at the World Games and attracted new spectator groups.

The awards ceremonies were arranged even more elaborately than at the National Games 2022. A consistent effort was also made to hold the awards ceremonies immediately after the competitions and as close to the playing fields or courts as possible, thus reducing waiting times for participants and improving the athlete experience. At the same time, it was important that spectators, especially the athletes' families, were able to witness the awards ceremonies. Only at the Exhibition Center were most of the awards ceremonies held at two central locations – the Summer Garden and the Palais am Funkturm. Thanks to good organization, short distances and the impressive setting of these venues, this did not diminish the experience for the winners, but rather added in particular to the emotional atmosphere of the Special Olympics Festival in the Summer Garden.

As is customary with Special Olympics, all participants were honored during the awards ceremonies.

The Special Olympics sports concept aims to provide fair and exciting competition for all athletes, regardless of their individual ability levels. The Special Olympics classification system is fundamentally different from any other sports organization. It does not categorize individuals by type of disability – on the contrary, the defining criterion is individual performance. The evaluation of performance takes place during the classification process, which precedes the actual competitions. This principle ensures that only athletes, teams or groups with comparable levels of performance compete against each other, giving all participants a fair chance to win a medal. This system also explains the sometimes high number of awards ceremonies in some sports.

The following sections provide key information and data on each of the 26 sports and their respective venues at the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023.

Time Table

This info is from April 2023.

Training (Training is **not** public)

Divisioning Which athletes have got the same abilities? These athletes then compete against each other.

Preliminary Competition The athletes can qualify for the Finals.

Finals & Awards Ceremony

Sport	Venue	Friday 16 June	Saturday 17 June	Sunday 18 June	Monday 19 June	Tuesday 20 June	Wednesday 21 June	Thursday 22 June	Friday 23 June	Saturday 24 June	Sunday 25 June
Athletics	Hanns-Braun-Stadion at Olympiapark	△	△	⁘	○○	○○	○○	○○	○○	○○	○○
Badminton	Messe Berlin	△	△	⁘	⁘	⁘	○○	○○	○○	○○	○○
Basketball 3x3	Neptunbrunnen	△	△	⁘	⁘	⁘	///	///	///	○○	○○
Basketball 5v5	Messe Berlin	△	△	⁘	⁘	///	///	///	///	○○	
Beach Volleyball	BeachMitte	△	△	⁘	⁘	⁘	///	///	///	○○	
Bocce	Messe Berlin	△	△	⁘	///	///	○○	○○	///	○○	
Bowling	Bowling World	△	△	⁘	⁘	○○	○○	○○	○○	○○	
Cycling	Straße des 17. Juni	△	△	⁘	⁘	○○	○○	○○	○○	○○	○○
Equestrian	Reitclub at Olympiapark	△	△	△	⁘	○○	○○	○○	○○	○○	○○
Field Hockey	Hockeystadion at Olympiapark	△	△	⁘	///	///	///	///	///	○○	
Football (7 a side)	Maifeld at Olympiapark	△	△	⁘	⁘	⁘	///	///	○○	○○	
Futsal	August-Bier-Platz at Olympiapark	△		△	⁘	⁘	⁘		///	○○	
Golf	Bad Saarow	△			⁘	⁘	///	○○			
Gymnastics-Artistic	Messe Berlin							△	⁘	○○	○○
Gymnastics-Rhythmic	Messe Berlin	△	⁘	○○	○○	○○	○○				
Handball	Horst-Korber-Sportzentrum at Olympiapark	△	△	⁘	⁘	///	///	///	///	○○	
Judo	Messe Berlin	△			⁘	⁘		○○	○○	○○	
Kayaking	Grünau					△	⁘	○○	⁘	○○	
Open Water Swimming	Grünau	△	△	⁘	○○						
Powerlifting	Messe Berlin	△	△	△	○○	○○	○○	○○	○○	○○	
Roller Skating	Eissporthalle Charlottenburg at Olympiapark				△	○○	○○		○○	○○	
Sailing	Wannsee	△	△	△	⁘	⁘		///	///	○○	
Swimming	Schwimm- und Sprunghalle at Europa-Sport-Park, short: SSE	△	△	⁘	⁘	○○	○○	○○	○○	○○	
Table Tennis	Messe Berlin	△	△	⁘	⁘	⁘	○○	○○	○○	○○	
Tennis	SC Brandenburg e.V.	△	△	⁘	⁘	///	///	///	○○	○○	
Volleyball	Messe Berlin	△	△	⁘	⁘	///	///	///	///	○○	

ATHLETICS

Sports Venues Description:
The Hanns Braun Stadium in the Berlin Olympic Park was opened in 1936 and served as the venue for all athletics competitions at the Special Olympics World Games 2023. Located on the eastern side of the Olympic Park, the stadium features an eight-lane 400 m track as well as various facilities for individual events. A warm-up area was also provided for the World Games. In addition to the Hanns Braun Stadium, Friedrich-Friesen-Allee, which is directly adjacent to the stadium, provided sanitary facilities, concessions and merchandise stands. The awards ceremonies took place in the adjacent stadium at the throwing area.

Unified Sports Experience:
Held on June 18 with 8 teams, each consisting of 16 athletes and 16 guests.

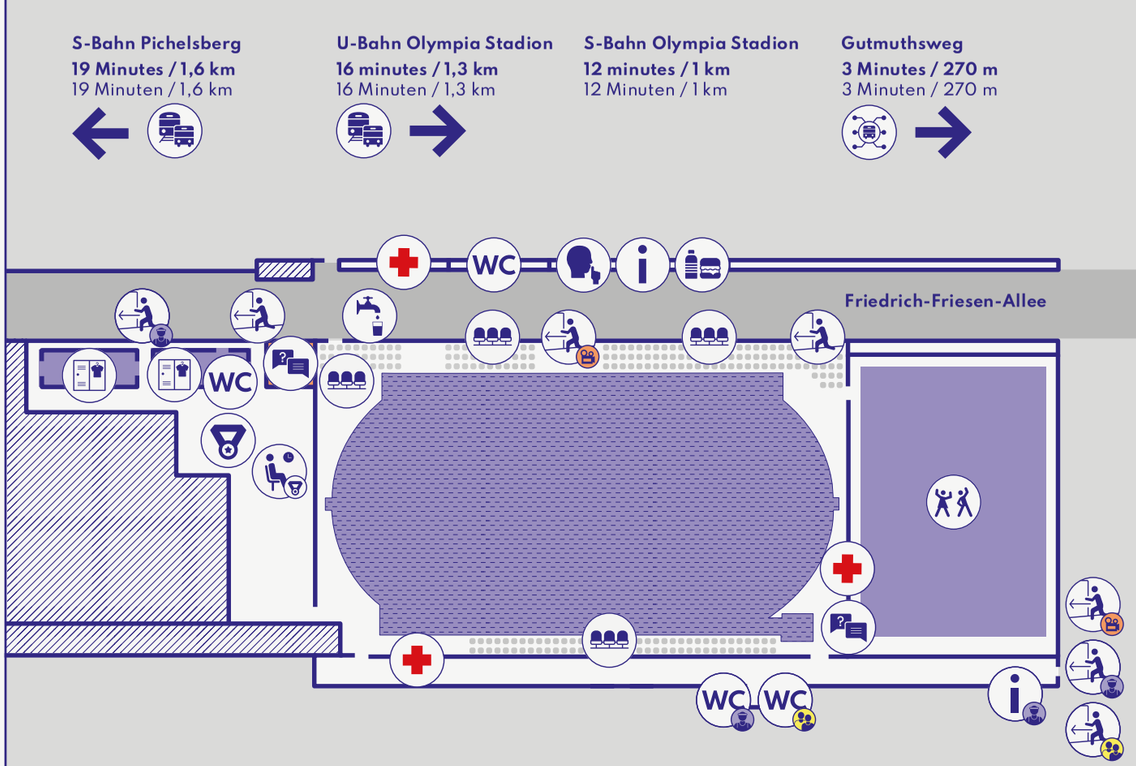
Disciplines:
- 50 m
- 100 m
- 200 m
- 400 m
- 800 m
- 1,500 m
- 3,000 m
- 5,000 m
- 10,000 m
- Mini Javelin
- Shot Put
- Standing Long Jump
- Long Jump
- 4 x 100 m Relay
- 4 x 400 m Relay

Number of athletes: 714
Number of Unified Partners: –
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 207

Olympiapark Hanns-Braun-Platz – Athletics
Olympiapark Hanns-Braun-Platz – Leichtathletik

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **First Aid** Erste Hilfe
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Drinking Water** Trink-Wasser
- **Warm-Up and Cool-Down Area** Aufwärm- und Abwärm-Bereich
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Food Stands** Essens-Stände
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Award Ceremony Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Award Ceremonies** Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Shuttle** Bus-Transport
- **Buses and Trains** Bus und Bahn
- **Quiet Room and Prayer Room** Ruhe-Raum und Gebets-Raum
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter
- **Press Area** Presse-Bereich



1486
1290
1174
1025
1230
1351
8

BADMINTON

Sports Venues Description:
The Exhibition Center (Messe) Berlin was one of the most important venues for the Special Olympic World Games Berlin 2023, hosting 9 sports and other major non-sports events. It also served as the Main Operations Center (MOC) for the Games. Hall 1.2 hosted the Badminton competitions for the Special Olympic World Games 2023 on 12 courts.

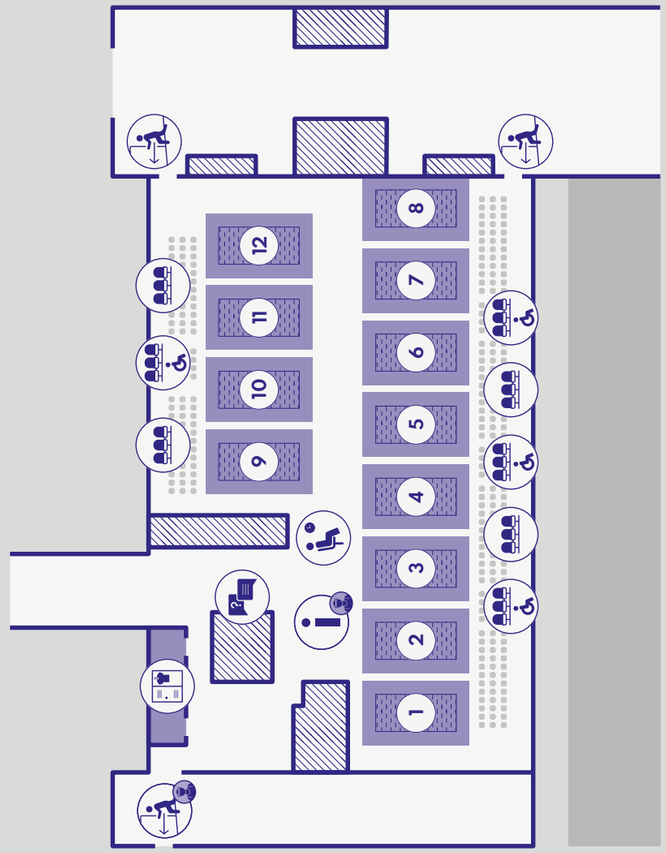
Unified Sports Experience:
Held on June 18 with 22 teams, each consisting of 22 athletes and 22 guests.

Disciplines:
- Singles (Women/Men)
- Doubles (Women/Men/Mixed)
- Unified Doubles (Women/Men/Mixed)

Number of athletes: 137
Number of Unified Partners: 56
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 63

Messe – Hall 1.2 – Badminton

Messe – Halle 1.2 – Badminton



Legend
Legende

- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Entry** Eingang
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Athlete Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Athleten

YONEX
BVF
BADMINTON WORLD FEDERATION
Gallagher

BASKET-BALL 5X5

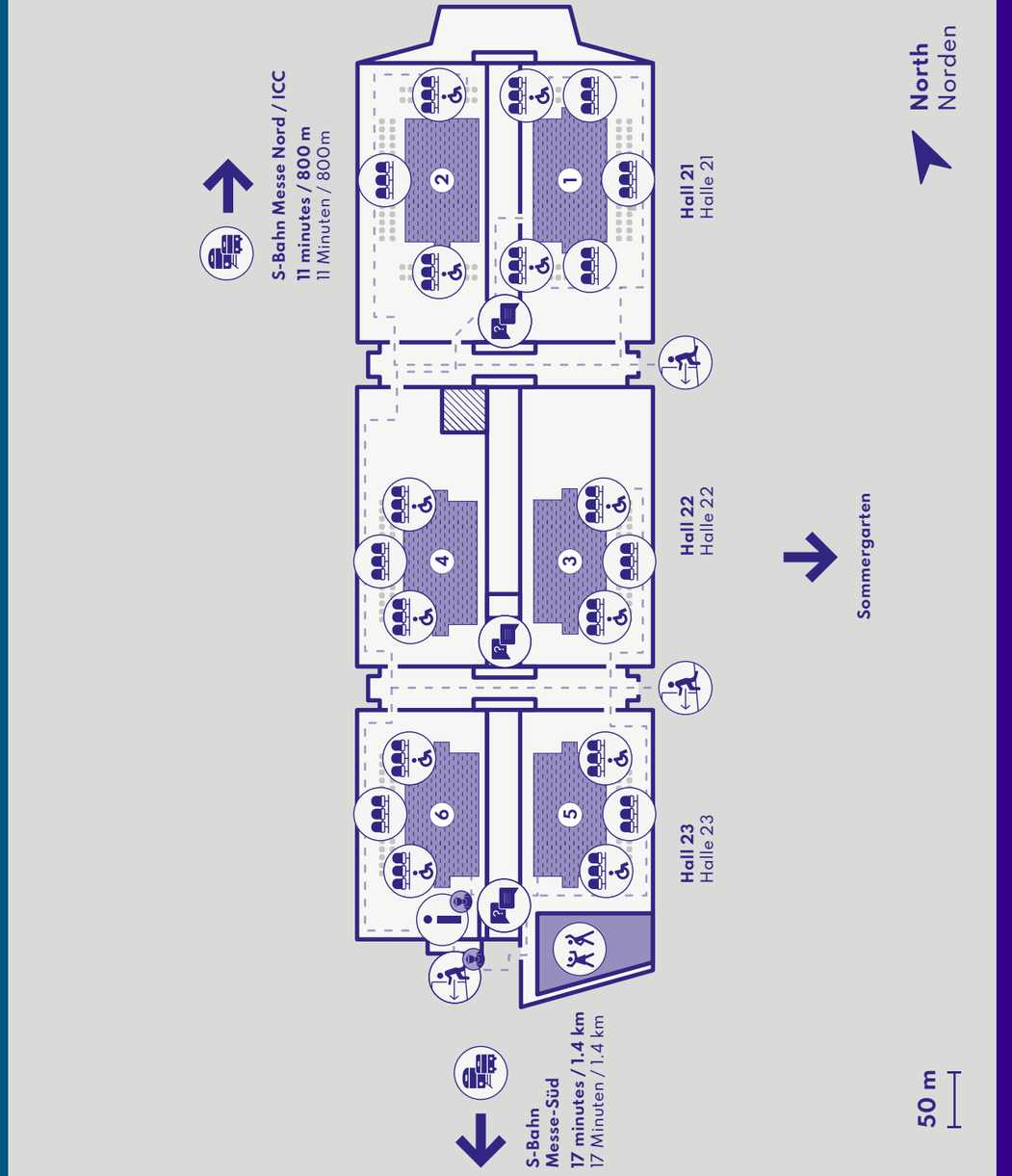
Sports Venues Description:
Halls 21, 22 and 23 of the Exhibition Center Berlin were the venues for the basketball competitions. A total of 6 courts with hardwood floors and subfloor systems were available, measuring 28 meters in length and 15 meters in width, measured from the inside edge of the boundary line.

Disciplines:

- Team Competition – Women
- Team Competition – Men/Mixed
- Unified Sports Team Competition – Women
- Unified Sports Team Competition – Men/Mixed

Number of athletes: 386
Number of Unified Partners: 117
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 14

Messe Halls 21-23 – Basketball



Legend
Legende

- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Entry** Eingang
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Buses and Trains** Bus und Bahn

SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
BERLIN 2023
#ZusammenUnschlagbar
#JointoWinTogether
U350
23
Coca-Cola
REWE
TOYOTA
#BERLIN2023
#BERLIN2023
#BERLIN2023
#BERLIN2023
#BERLIN2023
1
Coca-Cola

BASKET-BALL 3X3

Sports Venues Description:
The Neptune Fountain close to Alexanderplatz is one of the most beautiful fountains in Berlin. This famous water feature is located in the open space between Marienkirche and Red City Hall (Rotes Rathaus). Throughout the year, the square with the Neptune Fountain, right under the famous Berlin television tower, hosts a variety of events, including the popular Christmas Market at the Red City Hall. During the World Games, the Neptune Fountain hosted the Special Olympics Festival and the 3x3 basketball competitions. A competition court and two additional warm-up areas were set up.

Unified Sports Experience:
Held on June 20 with 3 teams, each consisting of 9 athletes and 9 guests. Held on June 23 with 3 teams, each consisting of 6 athletes and 9 guests.

Disciplines:
- Team competition 3x3 – women
- Unified Sports Team Competition 3x3 Men/Mixed

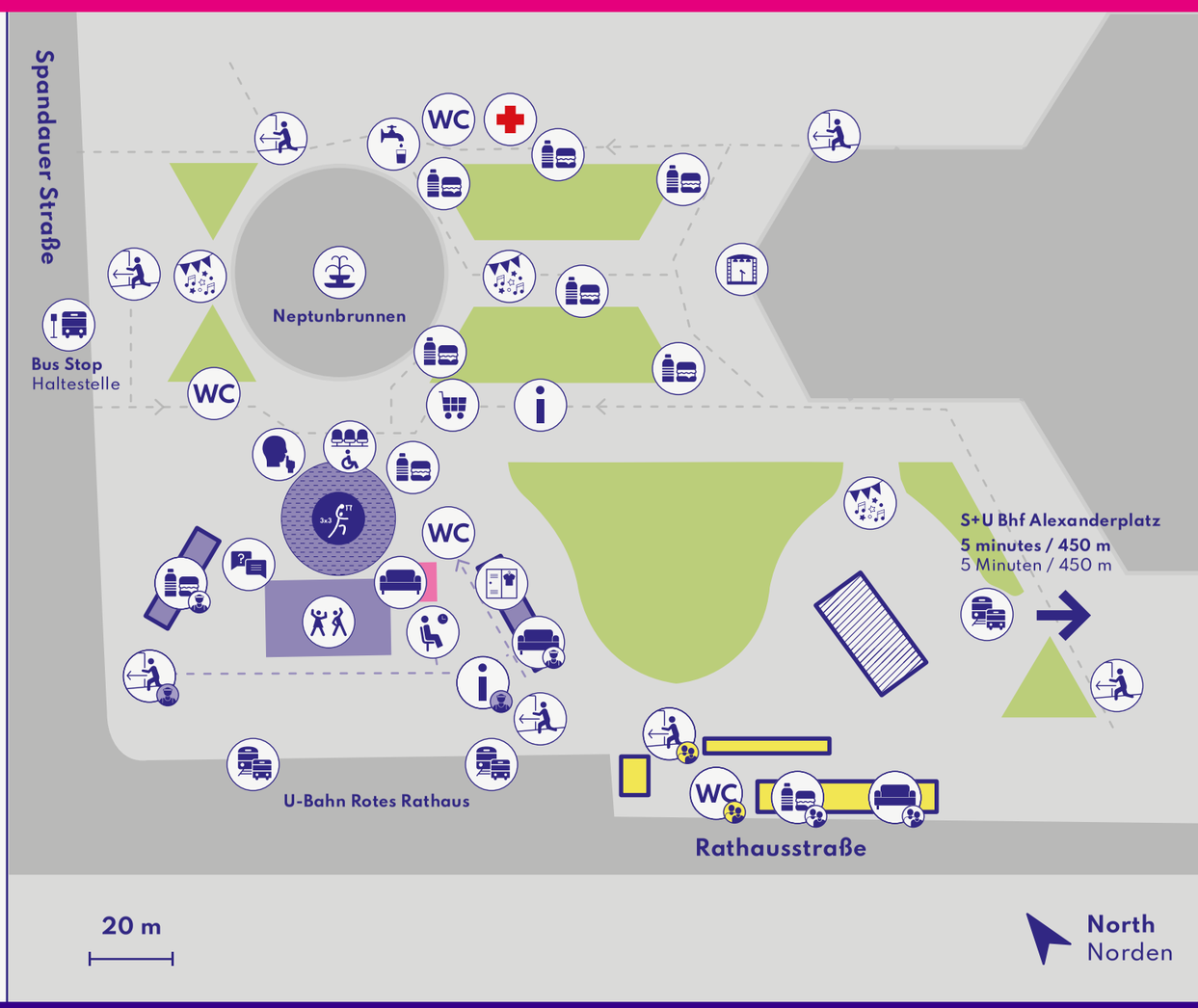
Number of athletes: 127
Number of Unified Partners: 31
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 7

Basketball 3x3 and Special Olympics Festival

Basketball 3x3 und Special Olympics Festival

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **First Aid** Erste Hilfe
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Buses and Trains** Bus und Bahn
- **Athlete Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Athleten
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Special Olympics Festival**
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Lounge**
- **Fan Shop**
- **Food and Drink** Essen und Trinken
- **Drinking Water** Trink-Wasser
- **Stage** Bühne
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Honored Guests and Families** Ehren-Gäste und Familien
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter



SO Germany 1
2 SPILL
3 THUN
6 SUESSMNANN
8 FRITZ
9 BORGER
TEAM COACH
4
00.0
00

BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Sports Venues Description:
BeachMitte is the largest inner-city beach in Europe, covering an area of 20,000m² of sand courts. The 47 beach volleyball courts offer plenty of space for both recreational and competitive players. Around 100 beach volleyball tournaments are held here every year, ranging from recreational tournaments to various German youth and senior championships. In 2023, the beach volleyball competitions of the Special Olympics World Games were held here.

During the Games, the facility remained open to the public, with the courts not used for the World Games remaining open to visitors. No admission tickets were required for this venue. Four courts and an additional warm-up area were prepared for the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023. The number of courts used simultaneously depended on the competition phase.

Unified Sports Experience:
Held on June 18 with 4 teams, each consisting of 12 athletes and 12 guests. Held on June 20 with 4 teams, each consisting of 6 athletes and 12 guests.

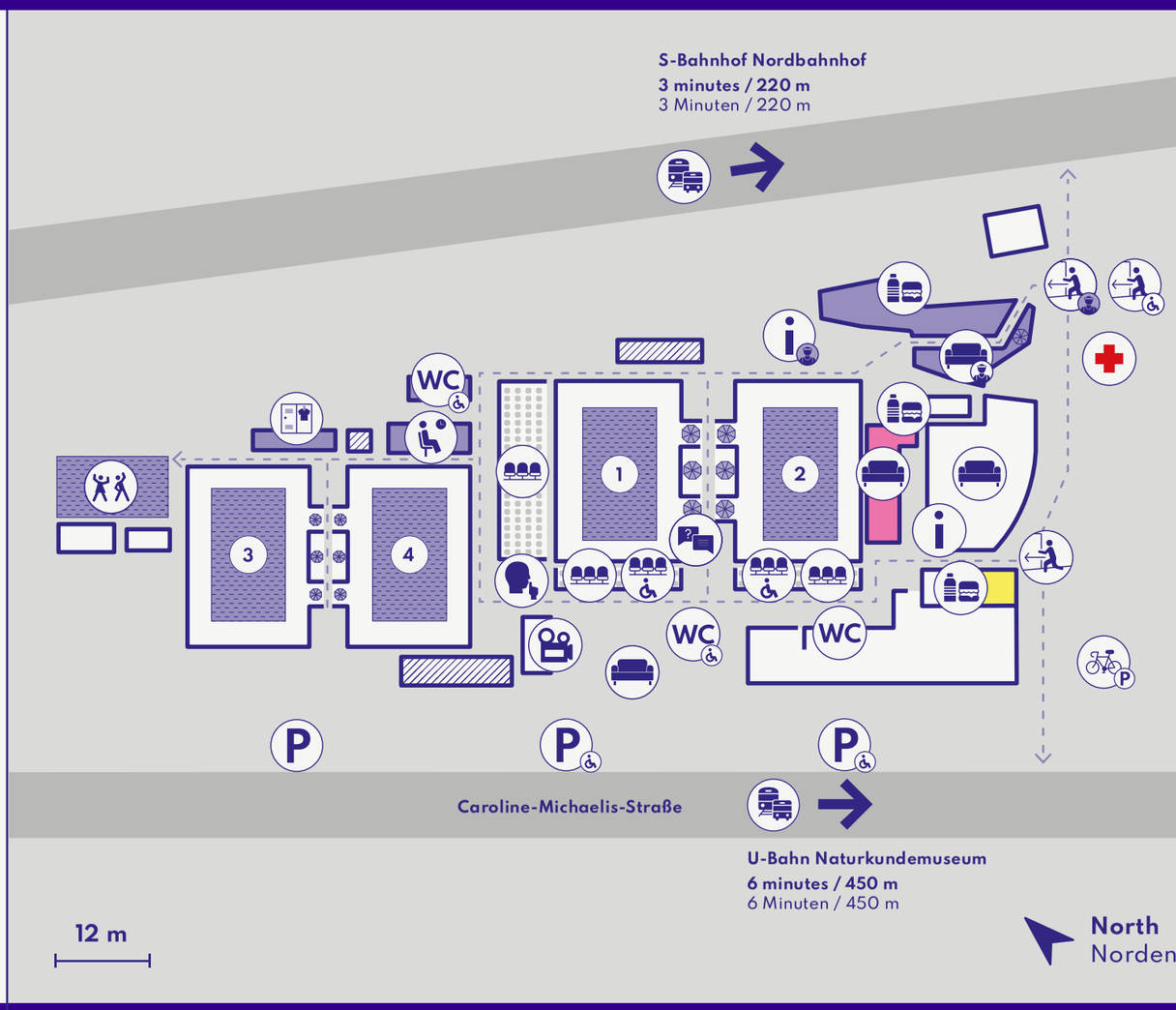
Disciplines:
- Unified Sports Team Competition – Women
- Unified Sports Team Competition – Men/Mixed

Number of athletes: 39
Number of Unified Partners: 39
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 3

Beach Mitte – Beach Volleyball

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **First Aid** Erste Hilfe
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Bicycle Parking** Fahrrad-Parkplatz
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Parking** Parkplatz
- **Food and Drink** Essen und Trinken
- **Quiet and Prayer Room** Ruhe-Raum und Gebets-Raum
- **Changing Room** Umkleideraum
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Athlete Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Athleten
- **Lounge**
- **Media** Presse
- **Buses and Trains** Bus und Bahn
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Honored Guests and Families** Ehren-Gäste und Familien
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter



#UnbeatableTogether
SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
BERLIN 2023
GERMANY
6
GERMANY
4
GERMANY
1

BOCCE

Sports Venues Description:
The bocce competitions also took place at the Exhibition Center (Messe) Berlin. A total of 16 courts with a width of 3.66 meters and a length of 18.29 meters were used in Hall 3.2.

Unified Sports Experience:
Held on June 19 with 8 teams, each consisting of 12 athletes and 16 guests.

Disciplines:
- Singles (Women/Men)
- Doubles (Women/Men)
- Traditional Team (4 People)
- Unified Sports Doubles (Men/Women/Mixed)
- Unified Sports Team (4 People)

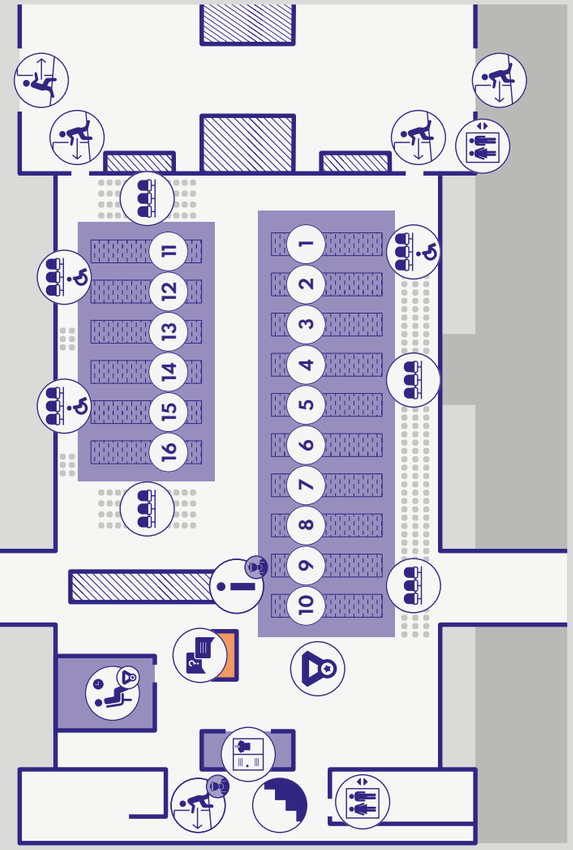
Number of athletes: 238
Number of Unified Partners: 46
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 76

Messe Hall 3.2 – Bocce
Messe Halle 3.2 – Boccia

North
Norden

Entrance South
Eingang Süd

Sommergarten



10 m

Legend
Legende

Award Ceremonies
Sieger-Ehrungen

Changing Room
Umkleide

Interview Area
Interview-Bereich

Sports Area
Spiel-Feld

Press Area
Presse-Bereich

Athlete
Athleten

Entry
Eingang

Exit
Ausgang

Info Point
Info Punkt

Stairs
Treppen

Seats
Sitzplätze

Elevator
Aufzug

Award Ceremony Waiting Area
Warte-Bereich Sieger-Ehrungen

Henkel
SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
BERLIN 2023
Unified Sports Experiences

BOWLING

Sports Venues Description:
Bowling World is part of Mercedes Platz, located at the heart of the dynamically growing neighborhood along the East Side Gallery. This facility has 28 bowling lanes equipped with high-tech scoring systems, automatic bumpers and 3 monitors for 2 lanes. The bowling competition for the Special Olympics World Games 2023 was held here, using 24 of the 48 bowling lanes and involving over 250 athletes and Unified Partners. Awards ceremonies were held on the outdoor grounds.

Disciplines:
- Singles
- Doubles
- Team (4 People)
- Unified Doubles
- Unified Team (4 People)

Number of athletes: 208

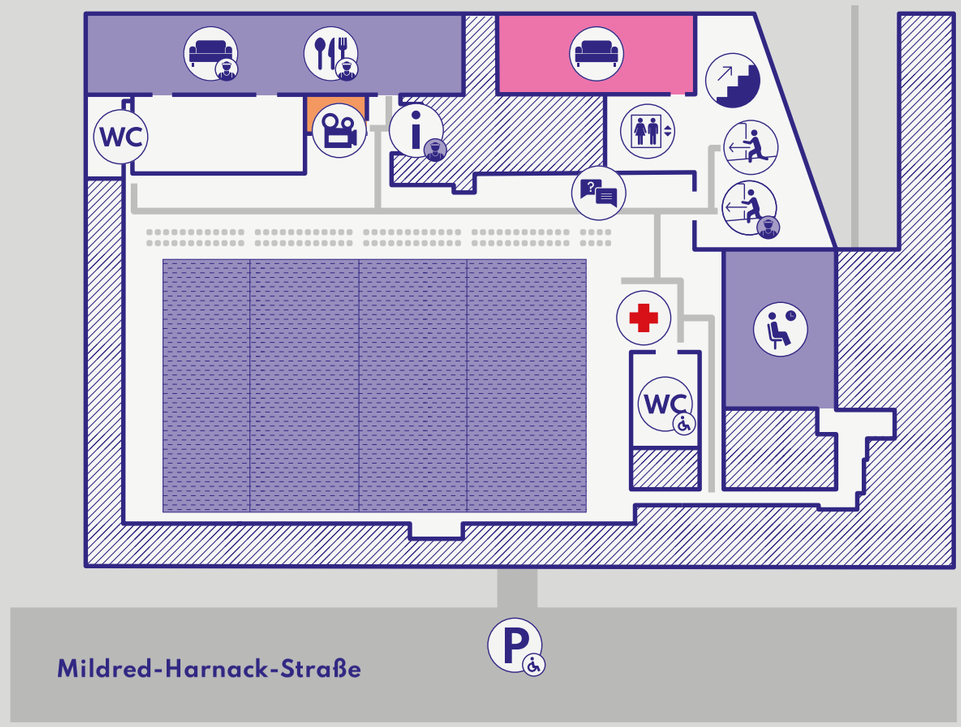
Number of Unified Partners: 45

Number of competitions/ceremonies: 66

Bowling World Mercedes Benz Platz
Level 1 – Bowling

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **First Aid** Erste Hilfe
- **Athlete Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Athleten
- **Stairs** Treppen
- **Parking** Parkplatz
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Media** Presse
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Elevator** Aufzug
- **Eating Area** Ess-Bereich
- **Lounge**
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Press Area** Presse-Bereich
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Honored Guests and Families** Ehren-Gäste und Familien



8 m

North
Norden

BOWLING WORLD
Brunswick
Brunswick
Brunswick

CYCLING

Sports Venues Description:

Straße des 17. Juni begins in the Tiergarten district in front of the Brandenburg Gate and runs all the way to Charlottenburg. Its name commemorates the 1953 popular uprising in East Germany. While its current name reflects a struggle for freedom, the street was expanded into a prestigious parade route for large military marches during the Nazi regime. Today, the street, which runs through the Great Tiergarten Park, serves a completely different purpose: as the backdrop for the legendary Berlin Love Parade, as the starting and finishing line for the Berlin Marathon, as a fan zone for major sports events, or for New Year's celebrations. It is a place of joy and celebration.

The start and finish area for the cycling competitions was located near the Soviet War Memorial. The cycling route for the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 was laid out around the Great Tiergarten Park, near the historic Brandenburg Gate, through Straße des 17. Juni, Yitzhak Rabin Strasse, Spreeweg, John Foster Dulles Avenue, Scheidemannstrasse and Ebertstraße.

Three different track lengths were used for the different race formats:

- 500 m course with a separate starting line (for the 500 m time trial)
- Short distance: 1 and 2 km (used for the 1 km and 2 km time trials)
- Long distance: 3.8 km (for all events with distances of 5 km or more)

Disciplines:

- 500 m Time Trial
- 1,000 m Time Trial
- 2,000 m Time Trial
- 5,000 m Time Trial
- 10,000 m Time Trial
- 5,000 m Road Race
- 10,000 m Road Race
- 15,000 m Road Race
- 25,000 m Road Race

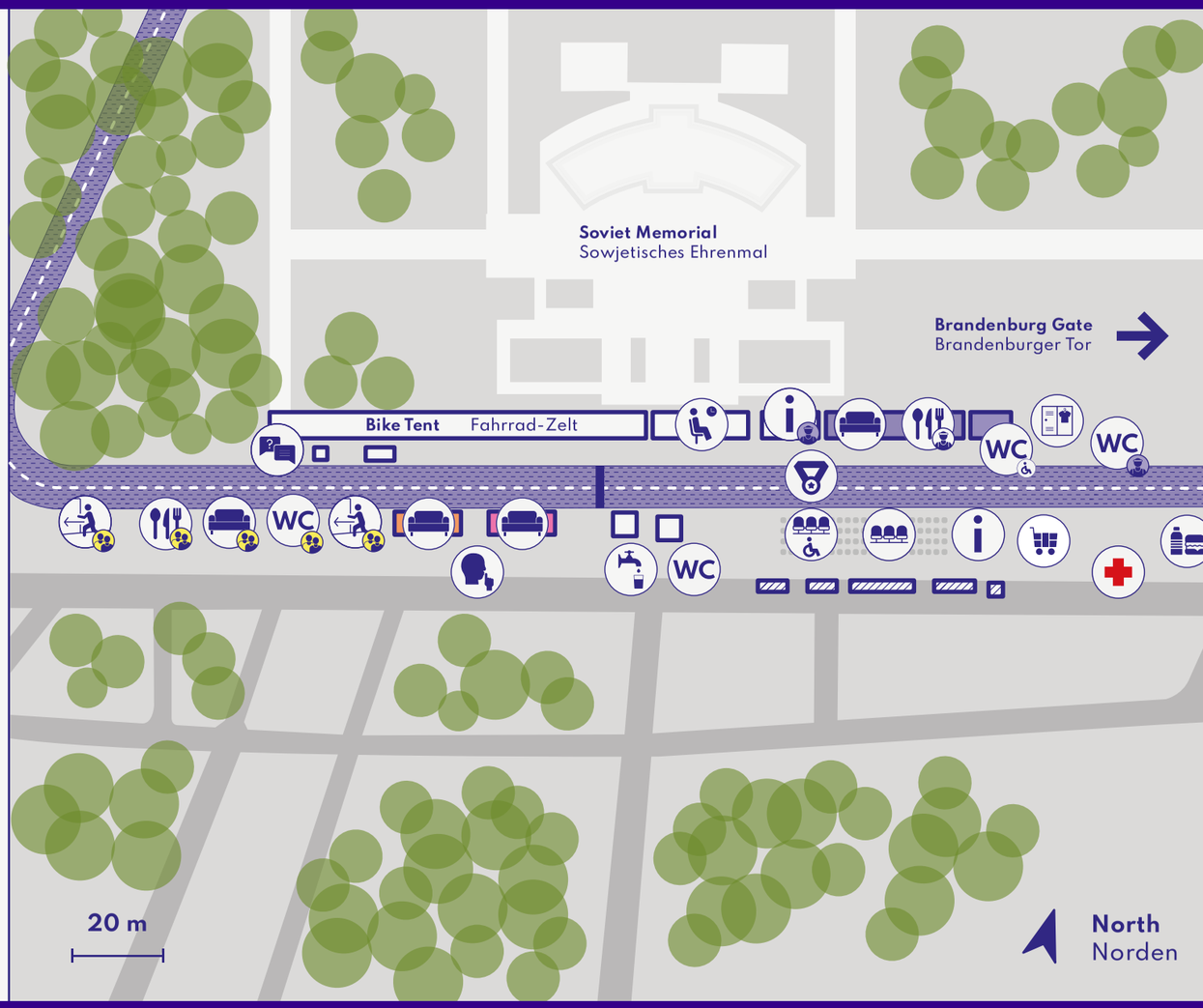
Number of athletes: 187
Number of Unified Partners: –
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 81

Brandenburg Gate and 17 June – Cycling

Brandenburger Tor und 17. Juni – Rad-Sport

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **First Aid** Erste Hilfe
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Award Ceremonies** Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Food and Drink** Essen und Trinken
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Quiet Room and Prayer Room** Ruhe-Raum und Gebets-Raum
- **Drinking Water** Trink-Wasser
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Lounge**
- **Eating Area** Ess-Bereich
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Athlete Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Athleten
- **Fan Shop**
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter
- **Press Area** Presse-Bereich
- **Honored Guests and Families** Ehren-Gäste und Familien



EQUESTRIAN

Sports Venues Description:
The Equestrian Club, Reitclub am Olympiapark e. V., is one of the venues on the west side of the Olympic Park complex. The Equestrian Club is located at the historic Pichelsberg Riding School and was founded in 1989. The Pichelsberg and Olympic Stadium riding facilities are part of the Berlin Olympic Park, which also includes the landmarked Reiterstadion (Equestrian Stadium). The facility hosted all equestrian events at the Special Olympics World Games 2023. There were two arenas (one indoor and one outdoor) and a warm-up area. The dressage arena had to be a level surface with a minimum size of 20 m x 40 m. The nearest public transport station is the Pichelsberg S-Bahn station.

Disciplines:
- Dressage
- Show Jumping
- Equestrian Competition
- Obstacle Course

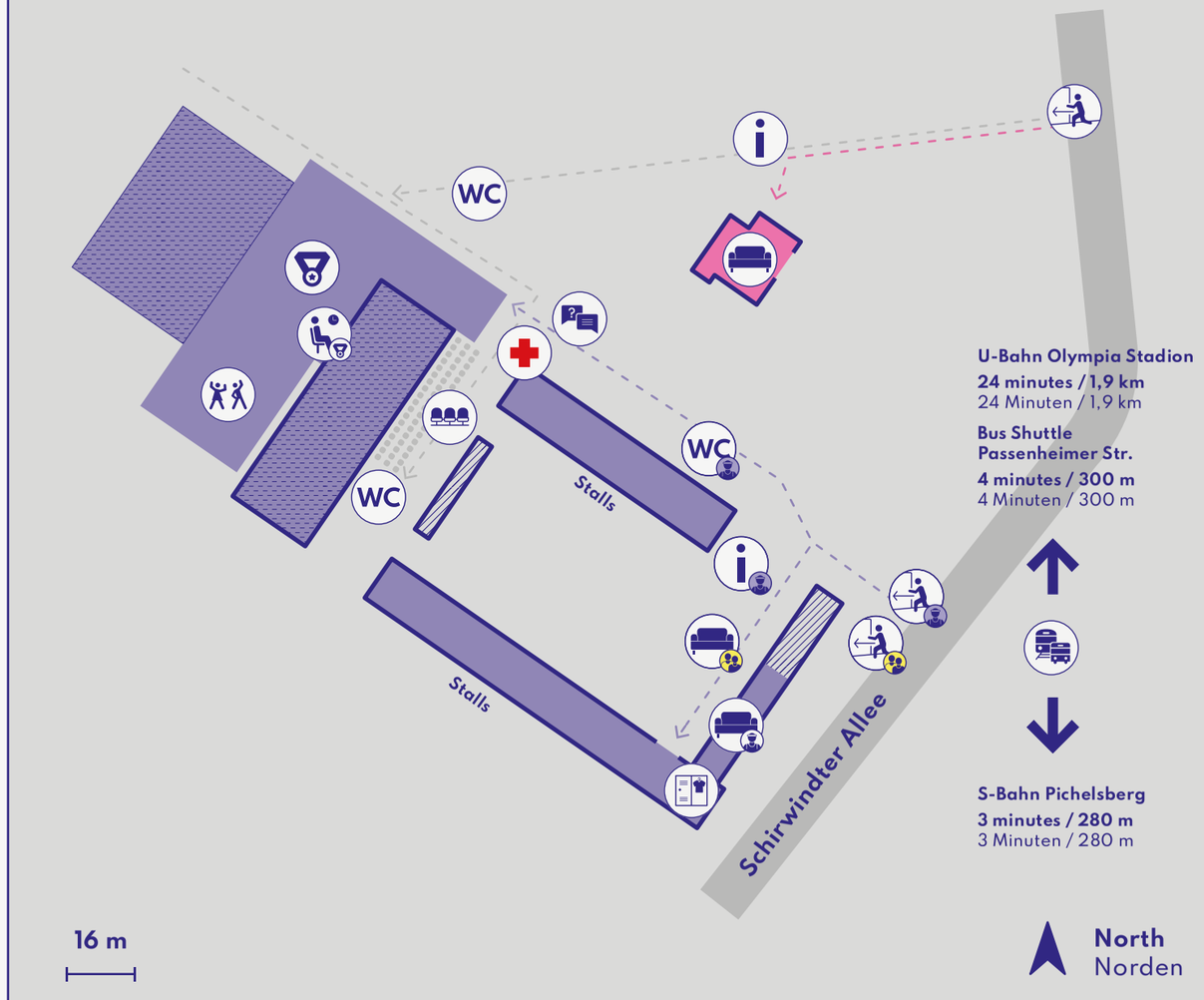
Number of athletes: 123
Number of Unified Partners: –
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 60

Reitclub am Olympiapark – Equestrian

Reitclub am Olympiapark – Reiten

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **First Aid** Erste Hilfe
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Buses and Trains** Bus und Bahn
- **Award Ceremony Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Lounge**
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Honored Guests and Families** Ehren-Gäste und Familien
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter



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FOOTBALL
(7-on-7)

Sports Venues Description:
Maifeld is a multifunctional grass field owned by the Olympic Park Administration. It was opened in 1936 and is used for various events. The area has a capacity of up to 250,000 people. As part of the Olympic Park cluster, it was the venue for the 7-on-7 football competitions at the World Games 2023. Maifeld was the center of the Olympic Park Cluster. It is located next to the Olympic Stadium and connects the east side of the Olympic Park with the west side. Maifeld itself has 6 football fields for the competitions and two warm-up areas. The field dimensions were 50 m x 37 m. In addition, there was a large tent area that housed the central catering area for the entire Olympic Park cluster, the VIP and family lounge, the volunteer lounge, the athletes lounge and the organization offices.

Unified Sports Experience:
Held on June 18 with 2 teams, each consisting of 12 athletes and 20 guests. Held on June 21 with 2 teams, each consisting of 12 athletes and 10 guests.

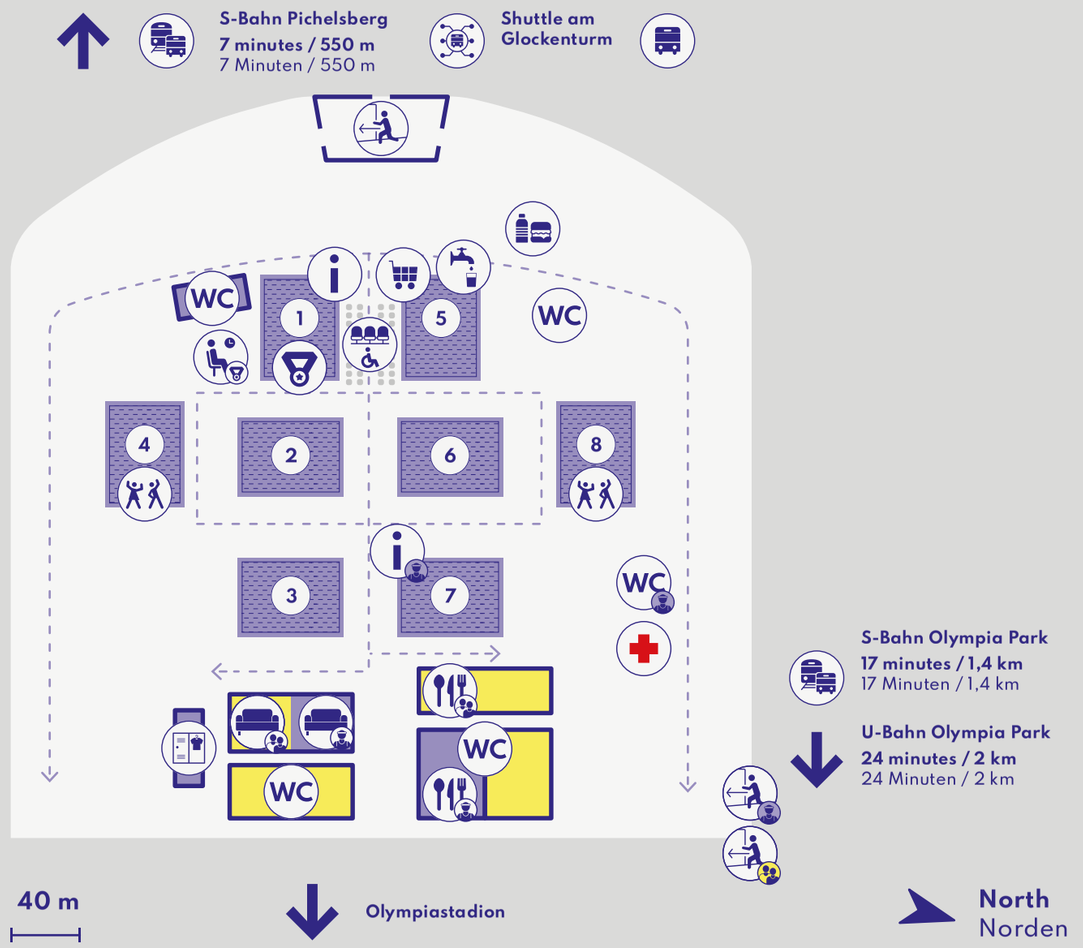
Disciplines:
- Team Competition – Women
- Team Competition – Men
- Unified Sports Team Competition – Women
- Unified Sports Team Competition – Men

Number of athletes: 470
Number of Unified Partners: 129
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 13

Olympiapark Maifeld – Football
Olympiapark Maifeld – Fußball

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **First Aid** Erste Hilfe
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Bus**
- **Buses and Trains** Bus und Bahn
- **Shuttle** Bus-Transport
- **Award Ceremony Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Award Ceremonies** Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Food and Drink** Essen und Trinken
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Fan Shop**
- **Lounge**
- **Eating Area** Ess-Bereich
- **Drinking Water** Trink-Wasser
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter
- **Athlete** Athleten



FUTSAL
(5-on-5)

Sports Venues Description:
August-Bier-Platz has two artificial turf football fields in the Berlin Olympic Park. They were opened in 1936 as an athletics stadium. Today the fields are mainly used by the youth teams of the football club Hertha BSC Berlin. The fields have a capacity of 1,000 spectators. As part of the Olympic Park cluster, the fields at August-Bier-Platz were the home of the futsal competitions during the World Games. Four rectangular fields were set up, each with a minimum size of 38m x 20m and a maximum size of 42 m x 25 m.

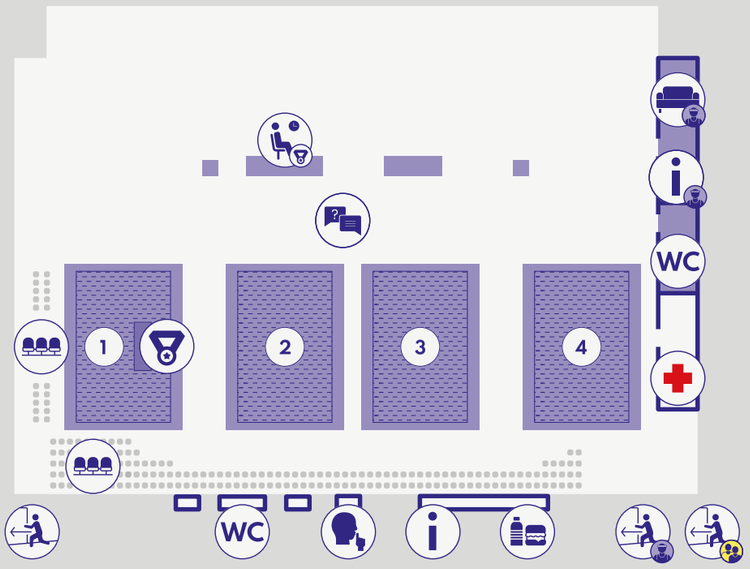
Disciplines:
- Team Competition – Women
- Team Competition – Men
- Unified Sports Team Competition – Men

Number of athletes: 212
Number of Unified Partners: 72
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 7

Olympiapark – August-Bier-Sportplatz – Futsal

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **First Aid** Erste Hilfe
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Buses and Trains** Bus und Bahn
- **Award Ceremony Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Award Ceremonies** Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Food and Drink** Essen und Trinken
- **Quiet Room and Prayer Room** Ruhe-Raum und Gebets-Raum
- **Lounge**
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter
- **Athlete** Athleten



Friedrich-Friesen-Allee

S-Bahn Pichelsberg
19 minutes / 1,6 km
19 Minuten / 1,6 km

S-Bahn Olympia Stadion
12 minutes / 1 km
12 Minuten / 1 km

U-Bahn Olympia Stadion
16 minutes / 1,3 km
16 Minuten / 1,3 km

Bus shuttle Gutmuthsweg
3 minutes / 270 m
3 Minuten / 270 m

15 m

North
Norden

REWE
TOYOTA

GOLF

Sports Venues Description:
The Bad Saarow Golf Club is located just outside of Berlin on beautiful Lake Scharmützel in Brandenburg. Golfers have access to four spectacular courses: three 18-hole courses – the FALDO Course Berlin, the Arnold Palmer Course and the Stan Eby Course – as well as the public 9-hole course. There is something for every level of golfer. The golf competitions in the World Games were held here, using a 9-hole and an 18-hole course, as well as a driving range and a putting green.

Disciplines:

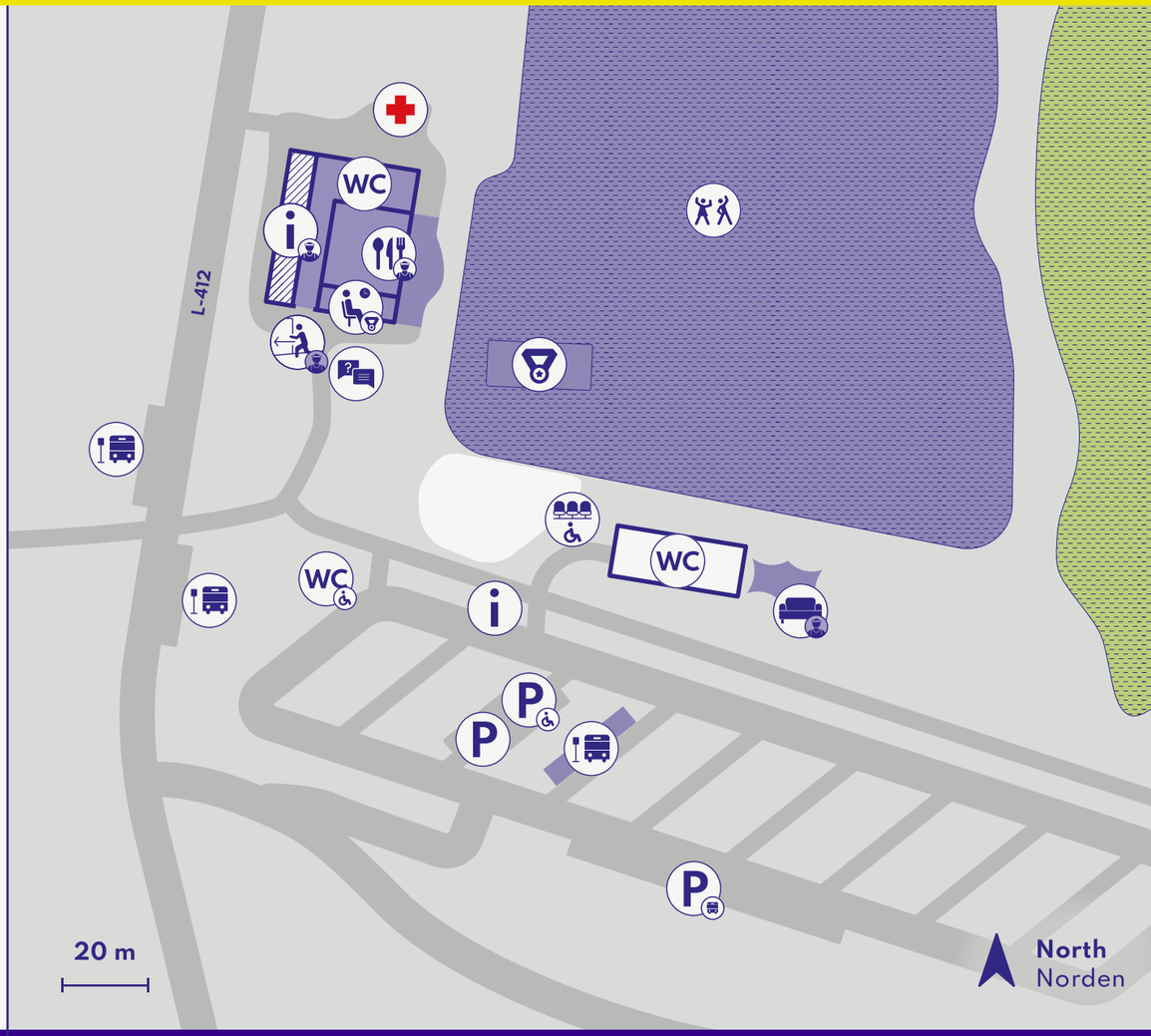
- Level 1 – Individual Performance Competition
- Level 2 – Unified Sports in Alternating Team Mode
- Level 3 – Unified Sports Team Play on the 18-hole Round
- Level 4 – Individual Competition over 9 Holes
- Level 5 – Individual Competition over 18 Holes

Number of athletes: 148
Number of Unified Partners: 33
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 39

Bad Saarow – Golf

Legend
Legende

- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Entry** Eingang
- **First Aid** Erste Hilfe
- **Parking Area** Parkplatz
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Bus Stop** Haltestelle
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Eating Area** Ess-Bereich
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Lounge**
- **Award Ceremony Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Award Ceremonies** Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Athlete** Athleten



GOLF SCHULE
SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
BERLIN 2023
SPORT OFFICIALS
VOLUNTEER
s.Oliver

GYMNASTICS-ARTISTIC

Disciplines:

- Women's competitions
  - Floor Exercise
  - Vault
  - Uneven Bars
  - Balance Beam
  - All Around
    (total score of all four disciplines)
- Men's competitions
  - Floor Exercise
  - Vault
  - Parallel Bars
  - Pommel Horse
  - Rings
  - Horizontal Bar
  - All Around
    (total score of all six disciplines)

Sports Venues Description:
The gymnastics competitions took place in Hall B of the City Cube at the Exhibition Center (Messe) Berlin. There were a total of 10 apparatuses – 6 for men and 4 for women.

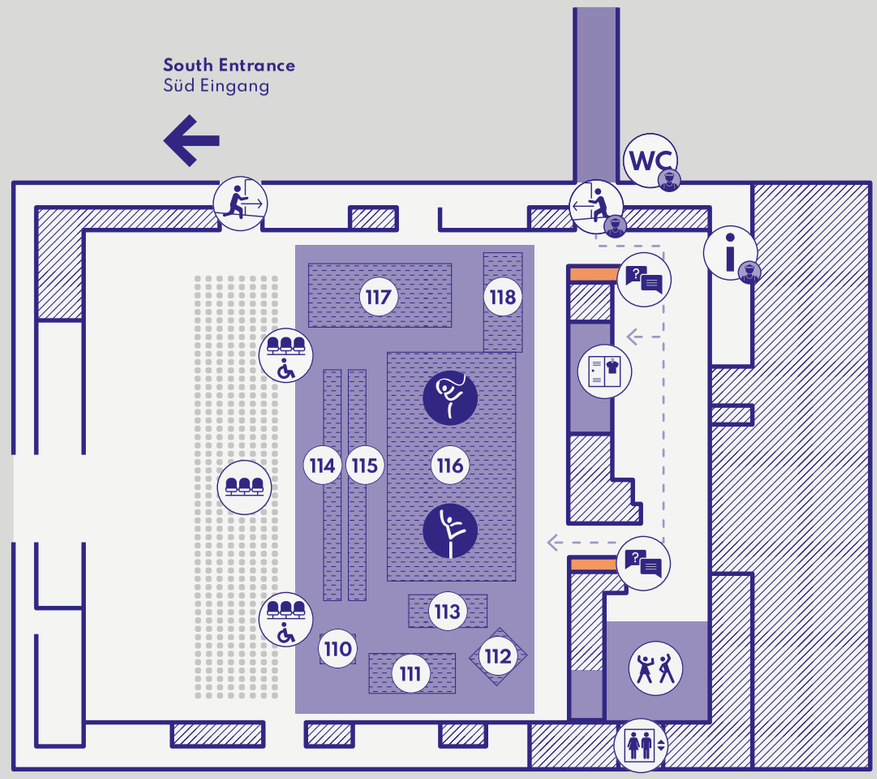
Number of athletes: 111
Number of Unified Partners: –
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 24

Messe City Cube B - Gymnastics-Rhythmic and Gymnastics-Artistic

Messe City Cube B – Rhytmische Sport-Gymnastik und Gerät-Turnen

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **Exit** Ausgang
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Press Area** Presse-Bereich
- **Athlete** Athleten



10 m

North
Norden

GYMNASTICS-RHYTHMIC

Sports Venues Description:

The rhythmic gymnastics competitions also took place at the Exhibition Center (Messe) Berlin. The City Cube Hall B was used for this purpose. Two fields and a warm-up area were provided for the competitions. The field dimensions were 13x13 m, with a safety zone of 1 m around the competition area.

Disciplines:

- Singles: Rope
- Singles: Hoop
- Singles: Ball
- Singles: Ribbon
- Singles: Clubs
- All around with different combinations
- Group exercise: Without Apparatus
- Group exercise: Hoop

The disciplines are divided into levels 1 to 4 (Level 4 being the most advanced)

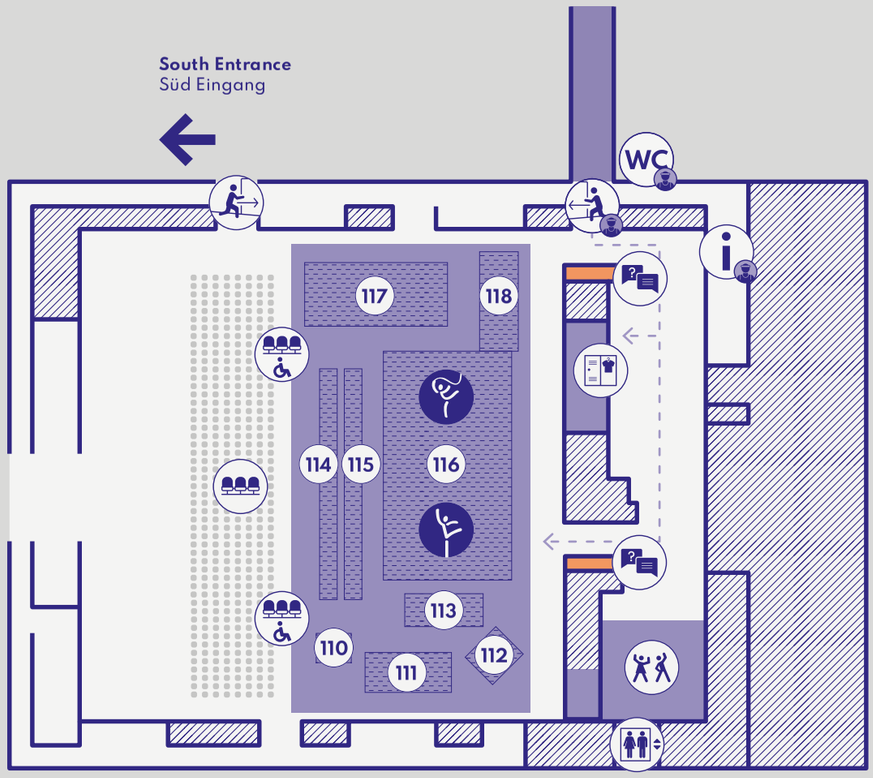
Number of athletes: 128
Number of Unified Partners: –
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 170

Messe City Cube B - Gymnastics-Rhythmic and Gymnastics-Artistic

Messe City Cube B – Rhytmische Sport-Gymnastik und Gerät-Turnen

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **Exit** Ausgang
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Press Area** Presse-Bereich
- **Athlete** Athleten



10 m

North
Norden

Coca-Cola
TOYOTA

HANDBALL

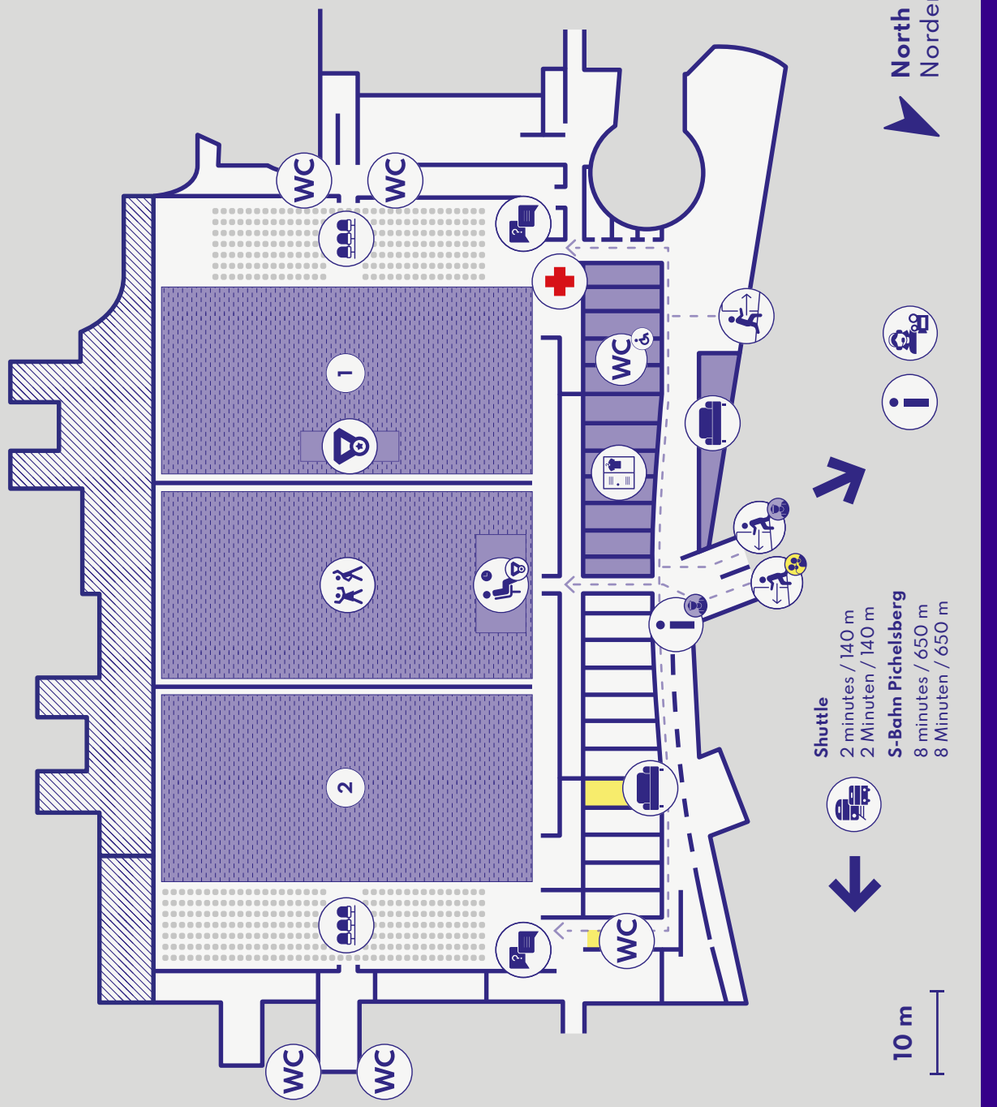
Sports Venues Description:
The Horst-Korber Sports Center (HKS) is a large indoor hall with three courts. It was opened in 1990. For the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023, two playing fields and a warm-up area were available, with the playing fields conforming to the official handball field dimensions of 20 meters in width and 40 meters in length. The seating capacity of the HKS is up to 3,500 spectators.
The HKS is located in the western part of the Olympic Park.

Unified Sports Experience:
Held on June 20 with 2 teams, each consisting of 11 athletes and 12 guests.

Disciplines:
- Team Competition – Women
- Unified Sports Team Competition – Men

Number of athletes: 175
Number of Unified Partners: 40
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 5

Olympiapark
Horst-Korber-Sportzentrum – Handball



Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **Exit** Ausgang
- **First Aid** Erste Hilfe
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Buses and Trains** Bus und Bahn
- **Press Center** Presse-Zentrum
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Award Ceremonies** Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Award Ceremony Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter

WORLD GAMES
BERLIN 2023
REWE
TOYOTA
Coca-Cola
Freshfields
schufa
SO Saudi Arabia
10

HOCKEY

Sports Venues Description:
The hockey stadium in Berlin's Olympic Park was opened in 1936. It hosted the hockey competitions in the World Games 2023. It is currently the home of the Berlin Hockey Association and can accommodate up to 5,000 standing spectators. Two rectangular fields, each 55m x 43m, were available for the Games.

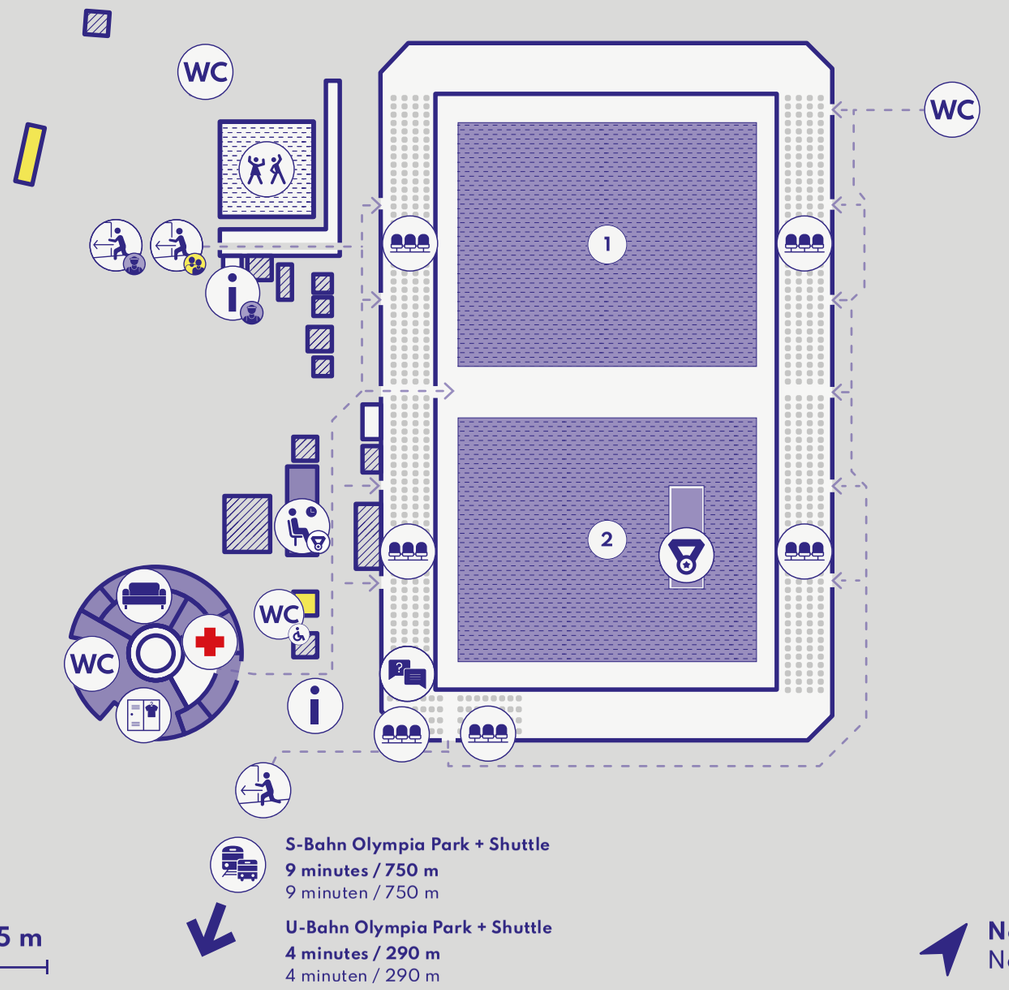
Disciplines:
- Team Competition – Mixed
- Team Competition – Men

Number of athletes: 129
Number of Unified Partners: -
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 3

Olympiapark Hockey-Stadion – Hockey

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **First Aid** Erste Hilfe
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Award Ceremony Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Lounge** Lounge
- **Award Ceremonies** Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Changing Room** Umkleideraum
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter



REWE
TOYOTA
#ZusammenUnschlagbar
#Unbeatable
BELGIUM

JUDO

Disciplines:

- Individual Competition – Women
  Weight classes <48 kg -52 kg -57 kg -63 kg -70 kg -78 kg +78 kg
- Individual Competition – Men
  Weight classes <60 -66 kg -73 kg -81 kg -90 kg -100 kg +100kg

At the World Games, judokas were categorized not only by weight and gender, but also by ability. Special Olympics rules and techniques are specially adapted to ensure the safety of the participants. For example, armlocks and choke holds are not allowed.

Number of athletes: 119
Number of Unified Partners: –
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 36

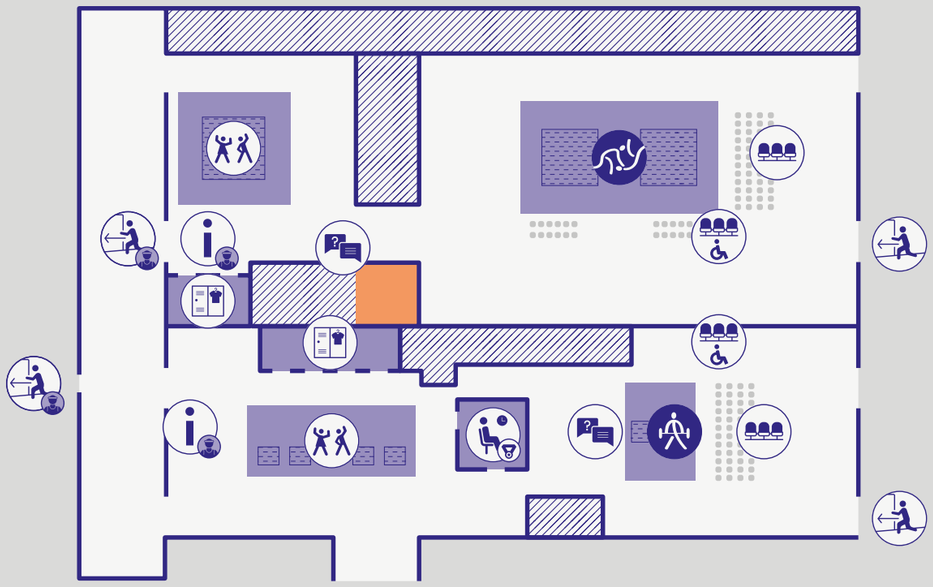
Sports Venues Description:
The judo competitions also took place at the Exhibition Center (Messe) Berlin. Hall 5.2b was used for this purpose, with 3 fields (2 competition fields and one warm-up field). The competition area was 8 m x 8 m. An additional security area was set up around the fields.

Messe Hall 5.2 – Judo and Powerlifting

Messe Halle 5.2 – Judo und Kraft-Dreikampf

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Award Ceremony Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Judo** Judo
- **Powerlifting** Kraft-Dreikampf
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Press Area** Presse-Bereich



50 Estonia

KAYAKING

Sports Venues Description:
In addition to open water swimming, the kayaking competitions also took place on the Grünau Regatta Course, which was built in the 19th century. Six lanes marked with buoys were used for the kayaking competitions at the World Games 2023. Competitions were held over distances of 200 m and 500 m.

Unified Sports Experience:
Held on June 22 with 6 teams, each consisting of 9 athletes and 12 guests.

Disciplines:
- Single Tourist Kayak KT-1: 200 m Race, 500 m Race
- Doubles Tourist Kayak KT-2: 200 m Race, 500 m Race
- Unified Sports® Doubles Tourist Kayak KT-2: 200 m Race, 500 m Race
- Unified Sports® Doubles Professional Kayak K-2: 500 m Race

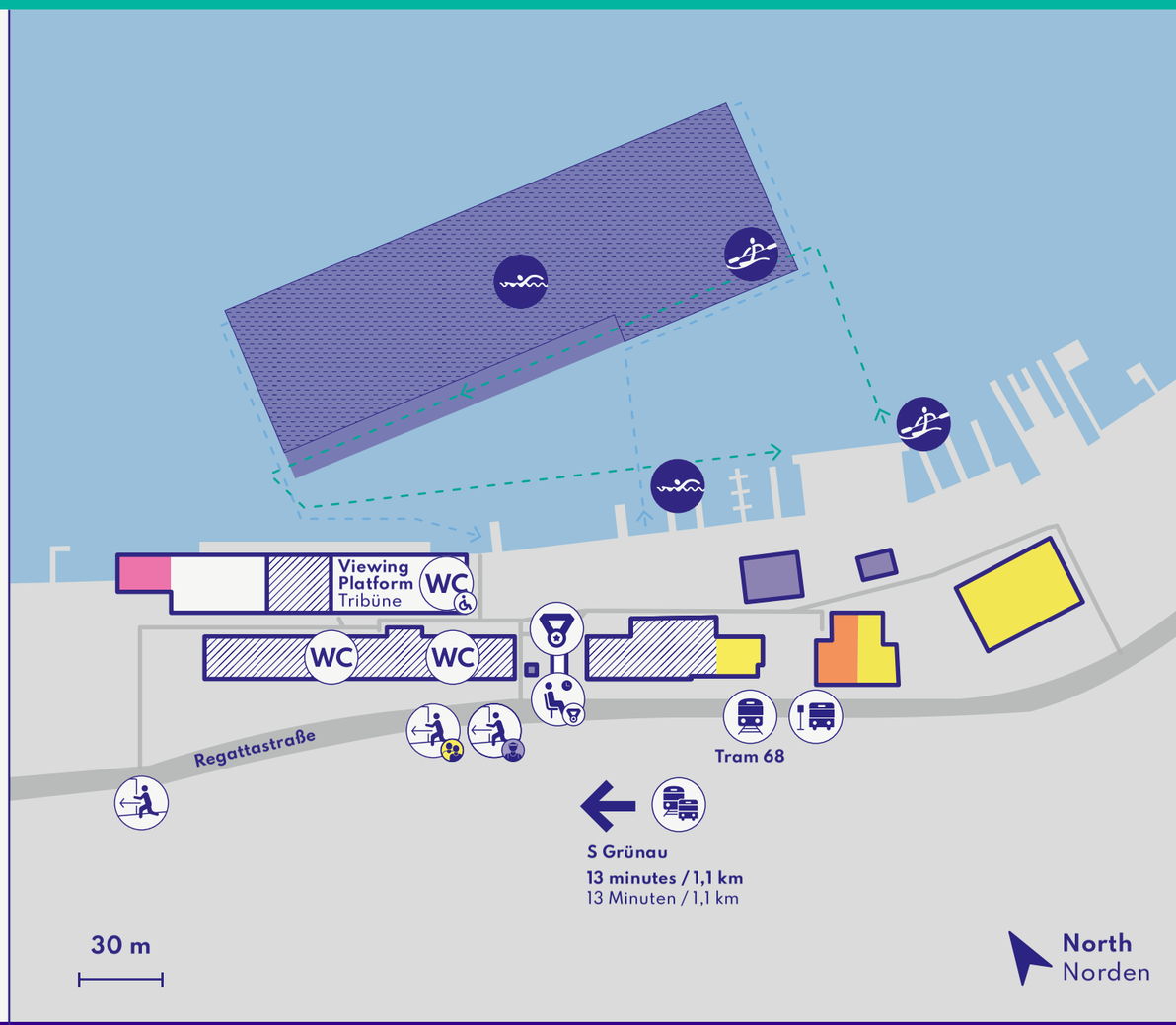
Number of athletes: 39
Number of Unified Partners: 8
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 26

Grünau – Open Water Swimming and Kayak

Grünau – Freiwasser-Schwimmen und Kanu

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Award Ceremonies** Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Award Ceremony Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Buses and Trains** Bus und Bahn
- **Tram** Straßenbahn
- **Bus Stop** Haltestelle
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter
- **Press Area** Presse-Bereich
- **Honored Guests and Families** Ehren-Gäste und Familien
- **Kayak Entry and Exit** Kanu Eingang und Ausgang
- **Open Swiming Entry and Exit** Freiwasser-Schwimmen Eingang und Ausgang



PRIJON
PRIJON
PRIJON
2
2

OPEN WATER SWIMMING

Sports Venues Description:
The Grünau Regatta Course was built at the end of the 19th century and is located in the southeast of Berlin in a bay of the Dahme River. It was the venue for the rowing and canoeing events of the 1936 Olympic Games. The course is 2,000 meters long and has six lanes for rowing and nine lanes for canoeing. It is owned by the district of Treptow-Köpenick. For the Special Olympics World Games 2023, buoys were used to mark the swimming course for the open water swimming competitions. The start was in the water.

Disciplines:
- 1,500 m Open Water Swimming
- 1,500 m Unified Sports Open Water Swimming

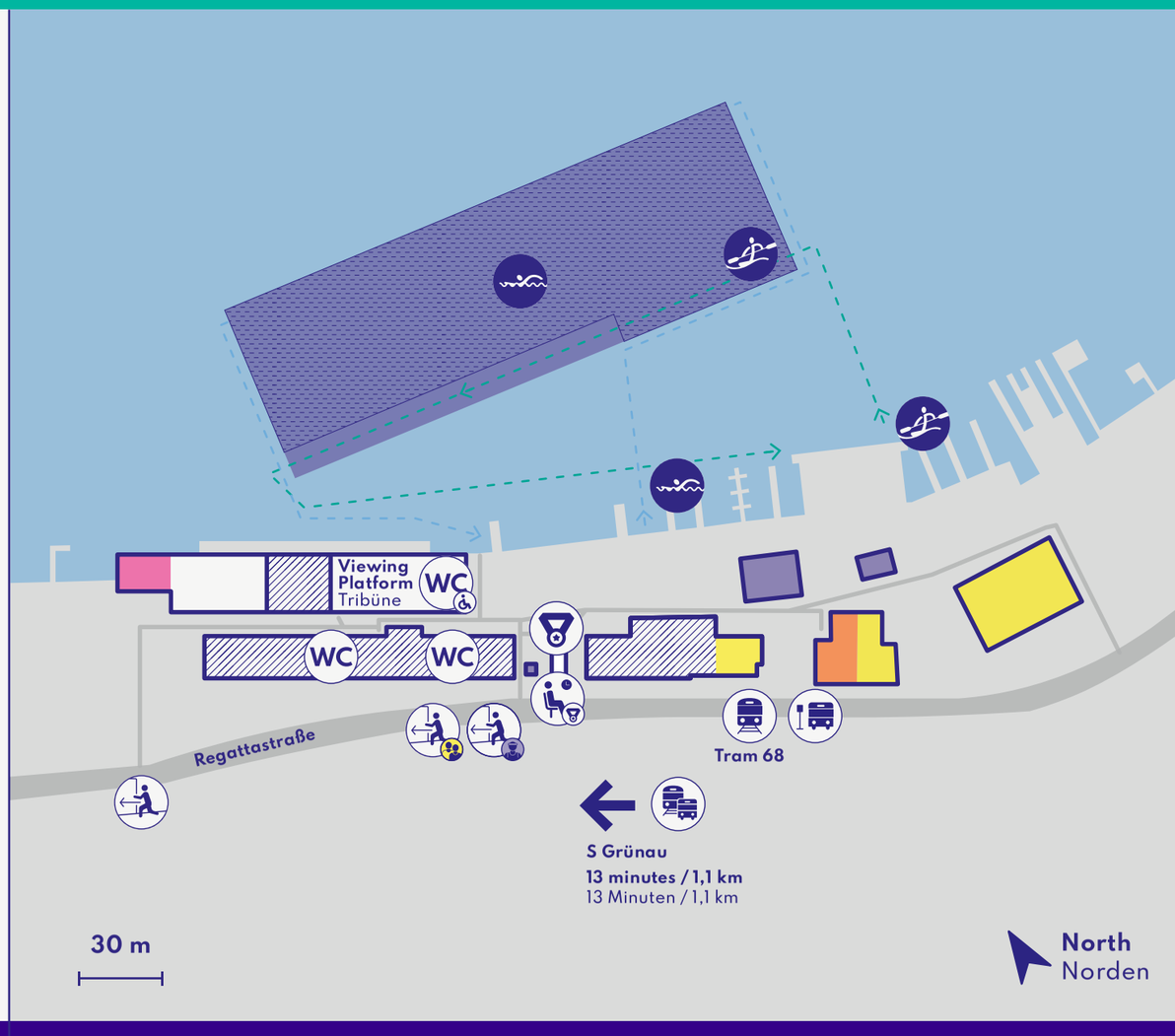
Number of athletes: 20
Number of Unified Partners: 6 (including swimming)
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 6

Grünau – Open Water Swimming and Kayak

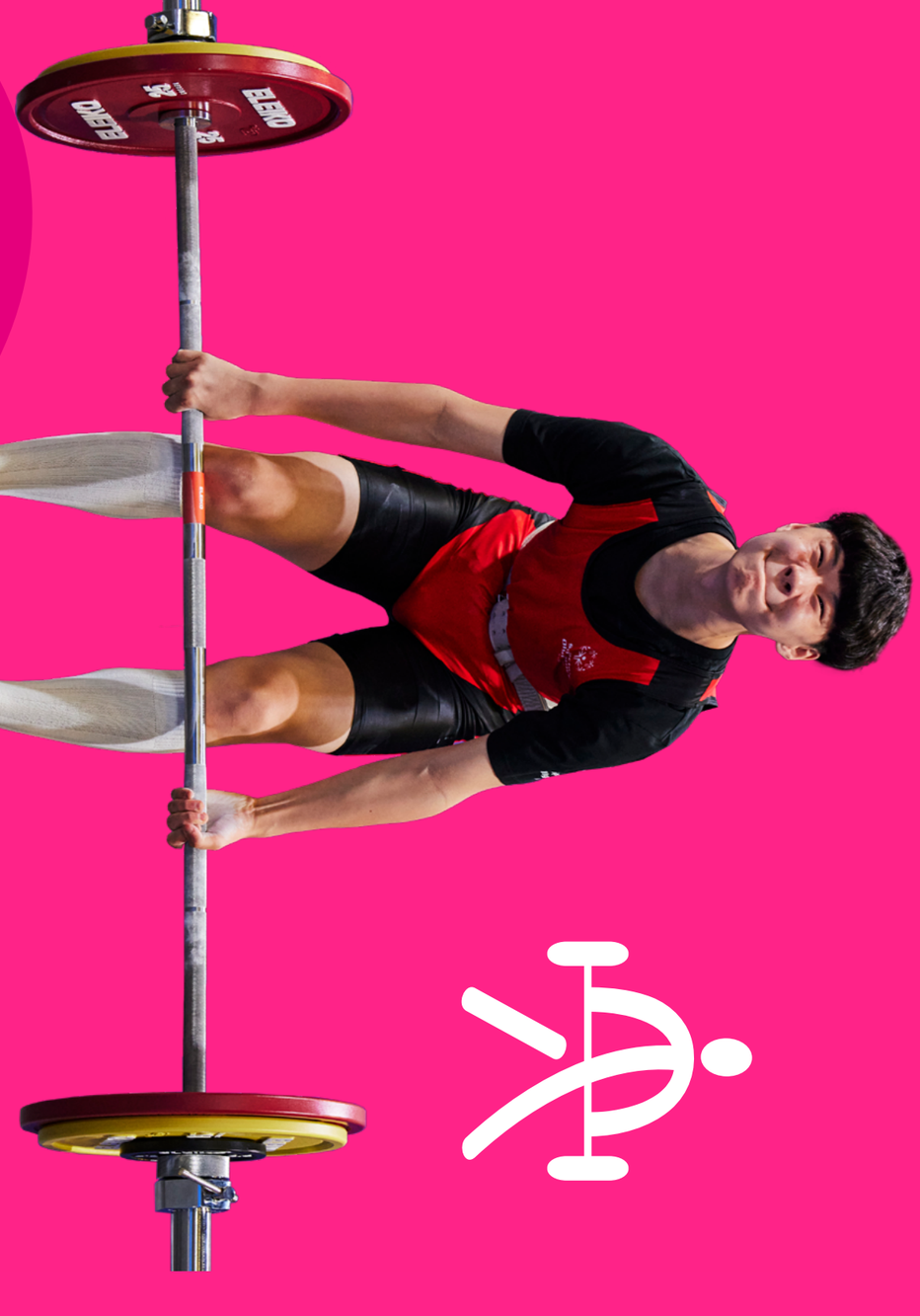
Grünau – Freiwasser-Schwimmen und Kanu

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Award Ceremonies** Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Award Ceremony Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Buses and Trains** Bus und Bahn
- **Tram** Straßenbahn
- **Bus Stop** Haltestelle
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter
- **Press Area** Presse-Bereich
- **Honored Guests and Families** Ehren-Gäste und Familien
- **Kayak Entry and Exit** Kanu Eingang und Ausgang
- **Open Swiming Entry and Exit** Freiwasser-Schwimmen Eingang und Ausgang



POWER-LIFTING



Sports Venues Description:
The Powerlifting competitions also took place at the Exhibition Center (Messe) Berlin. In Hall 5.2a, a competition field and 5 warm-up fields were provided. The dimensions of the platforms corresponded to the required dimensions, with a minimum of 2.5 m x 2.5 m and a maximum of 4.0 m x 4.0 m.

Disciplines:
- Bench Press
- Combined: Deadlift, Bench Press
- Combined: Squat, Deadlift, Bench Press

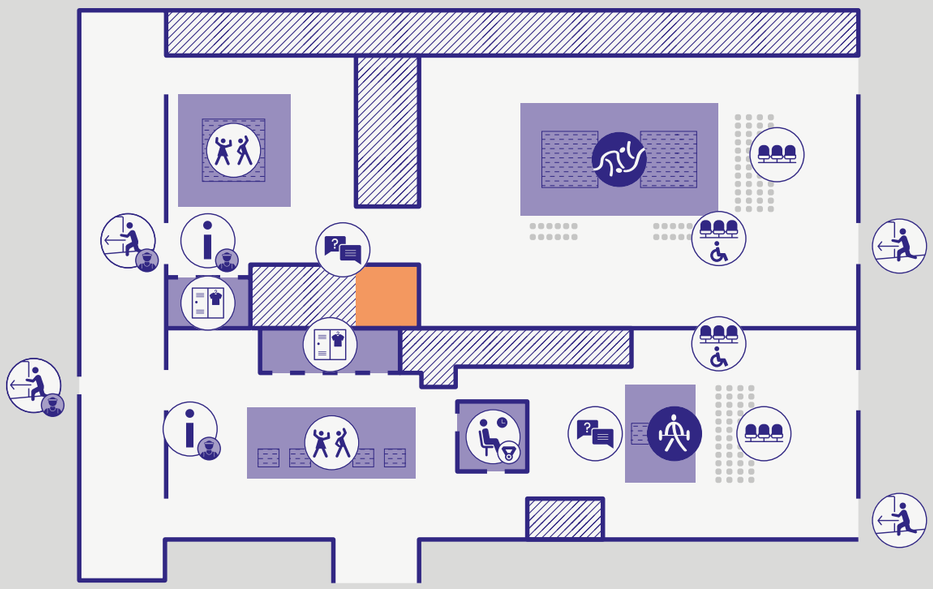
Number of athletes: 129
Number of Unified Partners: –
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 115

Messe Hall 5.2 – Judo and Powerlifting

Messe Halle 5.2 – Judo und Kraft-Dreikampf

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Award Ceremony Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Judo** Judo
- **Powerlifting** Kraft-Dreikampf
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Press Area** Presse-Bereich



103	GULACZ Marcel	73.45
92	NAALDIJK Jiven	65.53
28	DIARRA Kadiatou	

Special Olympics Egypt

ELEIKO

ROLLER SKATING

Sports Venues Description:
The Charlottenburg Ice Skating Rink is a multi-purpose sports facility on the edge of the Olympic Park in Berlin. It features an ice rink and the possibility of an indoor roller skating rink. During the World Games 2023, the roller skating competitions took place here. The venue, which opened in 2012, can accommodate a total of 700 spectators. There was a competition track and a warm-up track. The competition track required a barrier-free skating area at least 21 m in width and 51 m in length (70 x 170 feet) to match the 100 m track. The surface was smooth concrete.

Disciplines:
- 30 m Straight
- 30 m Slalom
- 100 m Race
- 300 m Race
- 500 m Race
- 1,000 m Race
- 2x100 m Relay
- 2x200 m Relay

Number of athletes: 91

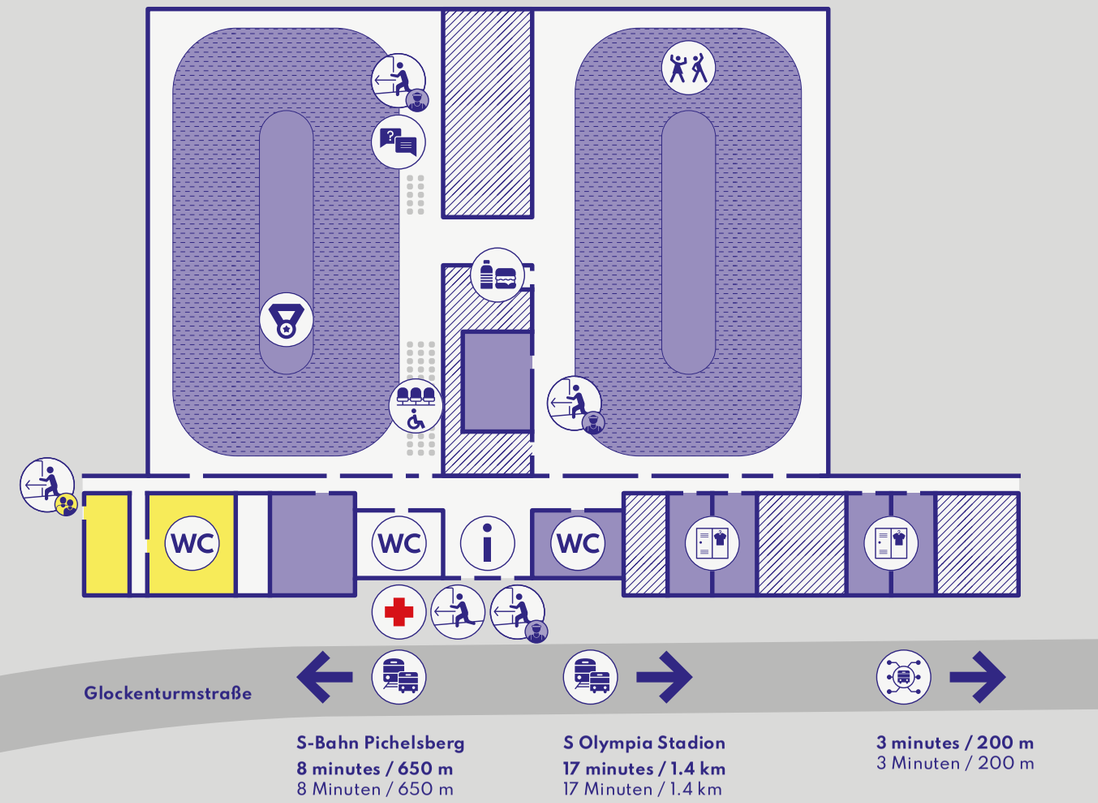
Number of Unified Partners: –

Number of competitions/ceremonies: 55

Olympiapark – Eissporthalle
Rollerskating

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **First Aid** Erste Hilfe
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Food and Drink** Essen und Trinken
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Award Ceremonies** Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Shuttle** Bus-Transport
- **Buses and Trains** Bus und Bahn
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
BERLIN 2023
1775
1806
1790

SAILING

Sports Venues Description:

The lake named Wannsee was the venue for the sailing competitions of the Special Olympics World Games 2023. Wannsee is not a lake in the traditional sense, but a bay of the Havel River in the southwest of Berlin. It is located in the Wannsee district of Steglitz-Zehlendorf. The area, which has played an important role in German sailing history, is now a popular inland beach destination with a variety of sailing clubs and water sports. The Seglerhaus Association at Wannsee is the second oldest sailing club in Germany. The clubhouse was built in 1910 and is a landmark building. The grounds and pier of the clubhouse are wheelchair accessible.

The course layout on the large Wannsee is based on course layouts 1 and 4 of the Special Olympics Summer Sailing Rules for the World Games: The distance from the windward mark to the leeward mark could not exceed 2,000 meters. In all races, the start and finish line could only be crossed to start or finish.

Disciplines:

- Level 1 – Unified Sports® Team
- Level 2 – Unified Sports® Team
- Level 3 – Unified Sports® Team

Explanation of Stages:

Level 1: Athletes are responsible for trimming the sail head.

Level 2: Athletes are responsible for rudder control throughout the race.

Level 3: Athletes sail with a Unified Partner on board. However, they have full control of the boat, while the Unified Partner can only shift their weight, provide tactical advice, and offer verbal support.

Number of athletes: 32
Number of Unified Partners: 25
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 8

Wannsee – Sailing

Wannsee – Segeln

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **First Aid** Erste Hilfe
- **Bus Stop** Haltestelle
- **Buses and Trains** Bus und Bahn
- **Athlete Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Athleten
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Award Ceremonies** Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Quiet and Prayer Room** Ruhe-Raum und Gebets-Raum
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Lounge**
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Eating Area** Ess-Bereich
- **Drinking Water** Trink-Wasser
- **Parking** Parkplatz
- **Honored Guests and Families** Ehren-Gäste und Familien
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter

SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
BERLIN 2023
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6

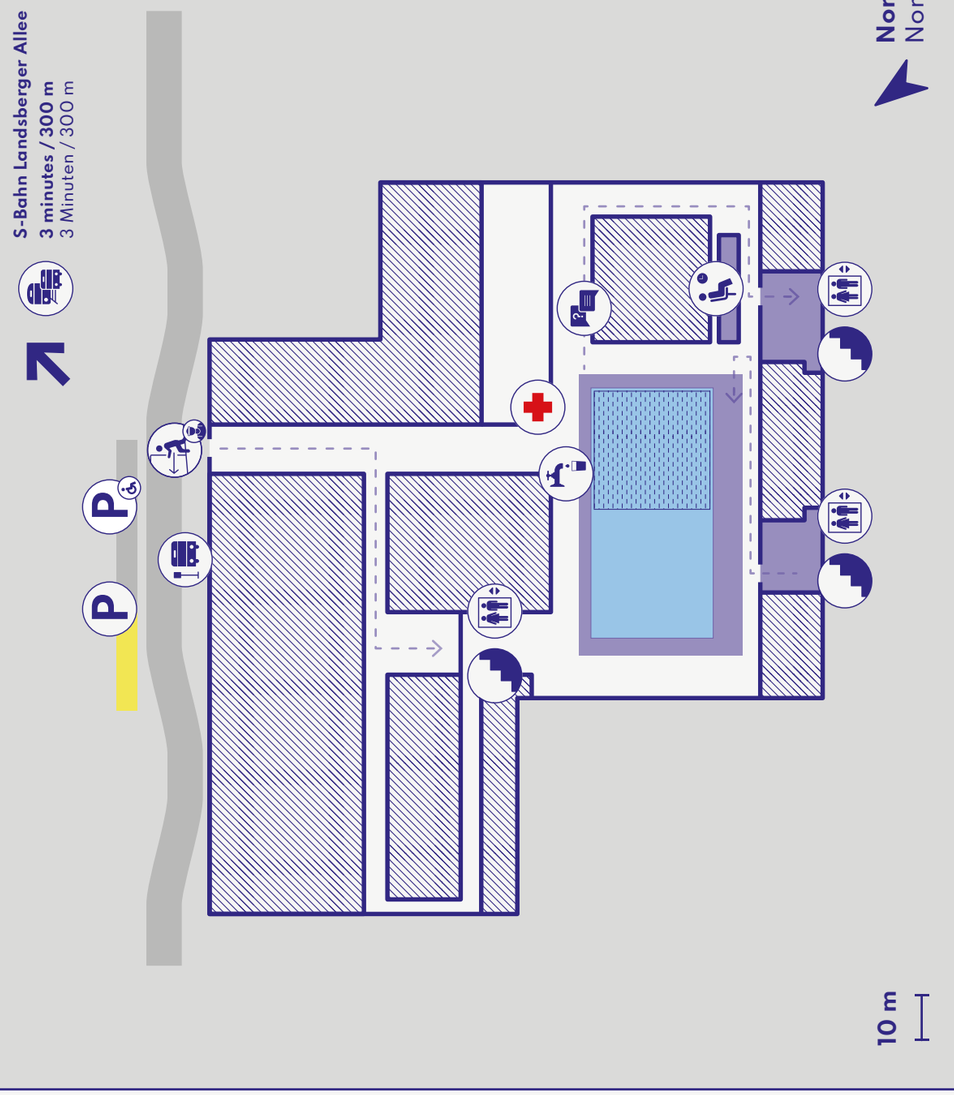
SWIMMING

Sports Venues Description:
The Swimming and Diving Hall in the Europe Sports Park (Europasportpark) (SSE) is an indoor swimming pool in Berlin and the venue for many national and international competitions. It is located on Landsberger Allee in the Prenzlauer Berg district of Pankow, near the Velodrom. There is an underpass to the building from the Landsberger Allee S-Bahn station. The hall regularly holds 2,500 spectators, and the pool has a water surface area of 3,391 m², making it the largest swimming pool in Europe (it has two 50 m pools and a diving pool). Eight 25 m lanes were used for the World Games.

Disciplines:
- 25 m Freestyle/Backstroke/Breaststroke
- 50 m Butterfly/Breaststroke/Freestyle/Backstroke
- 100 m Freestyle/Backstroke/Butterfly/Breaststroke/Medley Relay
- 200 m Freestyle/Breaststroke
- 400 m Freestyle
- 800 m Freestyle
- 1,500 m Freestyle
- 4 x 25 m Freestyle
- 4 x 50 m Freestyle
- 4 x 50 m Medley Relay

Number of athletes: 479
(including open water swimming)
Number of Unified Partners: 6
(including open water swimming)
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 153

Schwimm-und-Sprunghalle im Europasportpark – Level –1 – Swimming
Schwimm-und-Sprunghalle im Europasportpark – Etage –1 – Schwimmen



Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **First Aid** Erste Hilfe
- **Parking Area** Parkplatz
- **Buses and Trains** Bus und Bahn
- **Bus Stop** Haltestelle
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Stairs** Treppen
- **Athletes Route** Weg der Athleten
- **Elevator** Aufzug
- **Athlete Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Athleten
- **Drinking Water** Trink-Wasser
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter

TOYOTA
RWE
NIKE

TABLE TENNIS

Sports Venues Description:
The table tennis competitions also took place at the Exhibition Center (Messe) Berlin. In Hall 2.2 there were 26 courts (20 competition courts and 6 warm-up courts) with dimensions of 10 meters x 5 meters.

Disciplines:
- Singles (Men/Women)
- Doubles (Men/Women)
- Unified Doubles (Men/Women/Mixed)

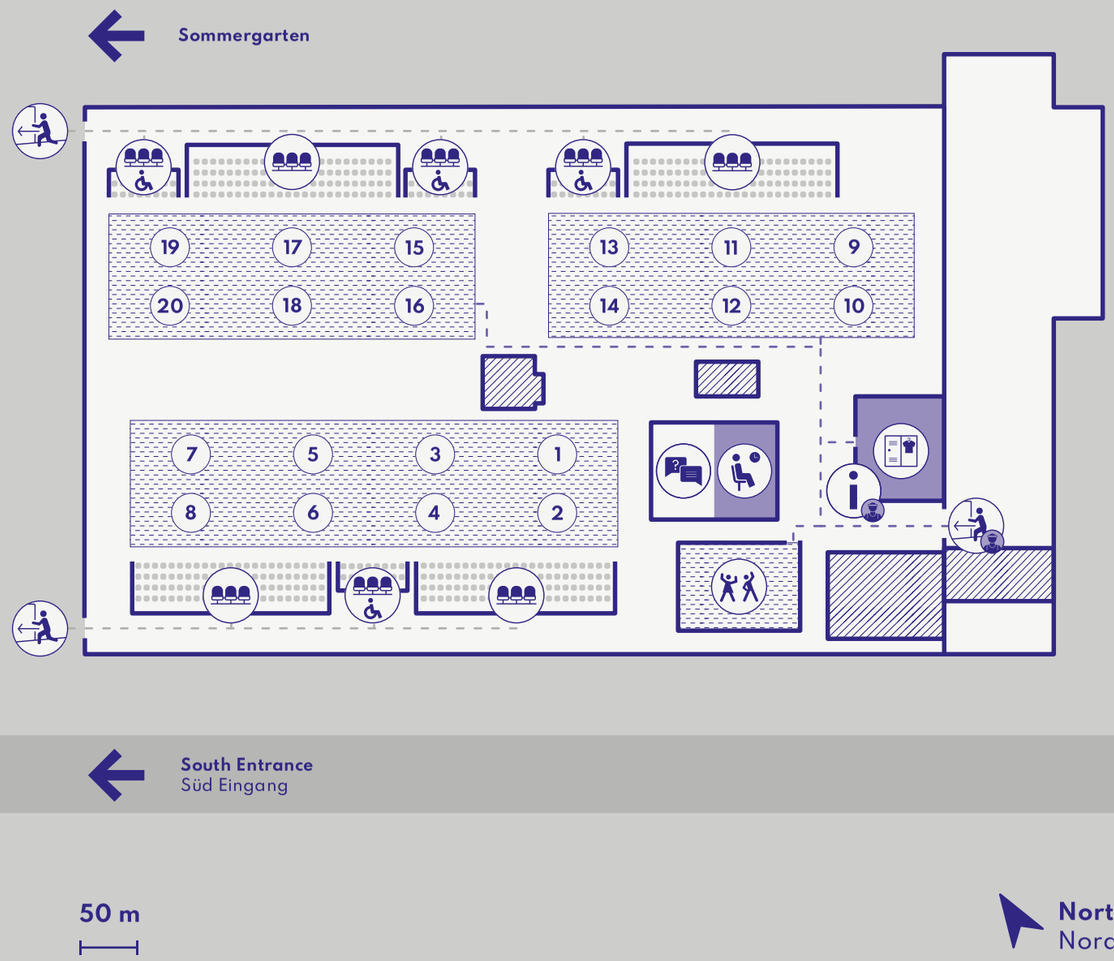
Number of athletes: 188
Number of Unified Partners: 38
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 57

Messe Hall 2.2 – Table Tennis

Messe Halle 2.2 – Tischtennis

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **Info Point** Info point
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Athlete Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Athleten
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
BERLIN 2023
BUTTERFLY
KRONOS

BUTTERFLY
CÔTE D'IVOIRE
1935
1937
MACAU CHINA
2034

TENNIS

Sports Venues Description:
The Tennis Club SC Brandenburg e.V. is one of the most attractive tennis facilities in Berlin. It is located in a quiet area on the edge of Grunewald Forest in Berlin-Charlottenburg, yet in the heart of the city, right next to the exhibition grounds. In the summer there are 10 tennis courts (clay) available, in the winter there are three tennis courts in a modern tennis hall.
During the World Games, 8 courts were used for the competitions and 2 courts were used for warm-up. According to the current regulations, a court for singles matches had to be a rectangle with a length of 23.77 meters and a width of 8.23 meters. For doubles, the court had to be 10.97 meters wide.

Unified Sports Experience:
Held on June 20 with 8 teams, each consisting of 8 athletes and 8 guests.

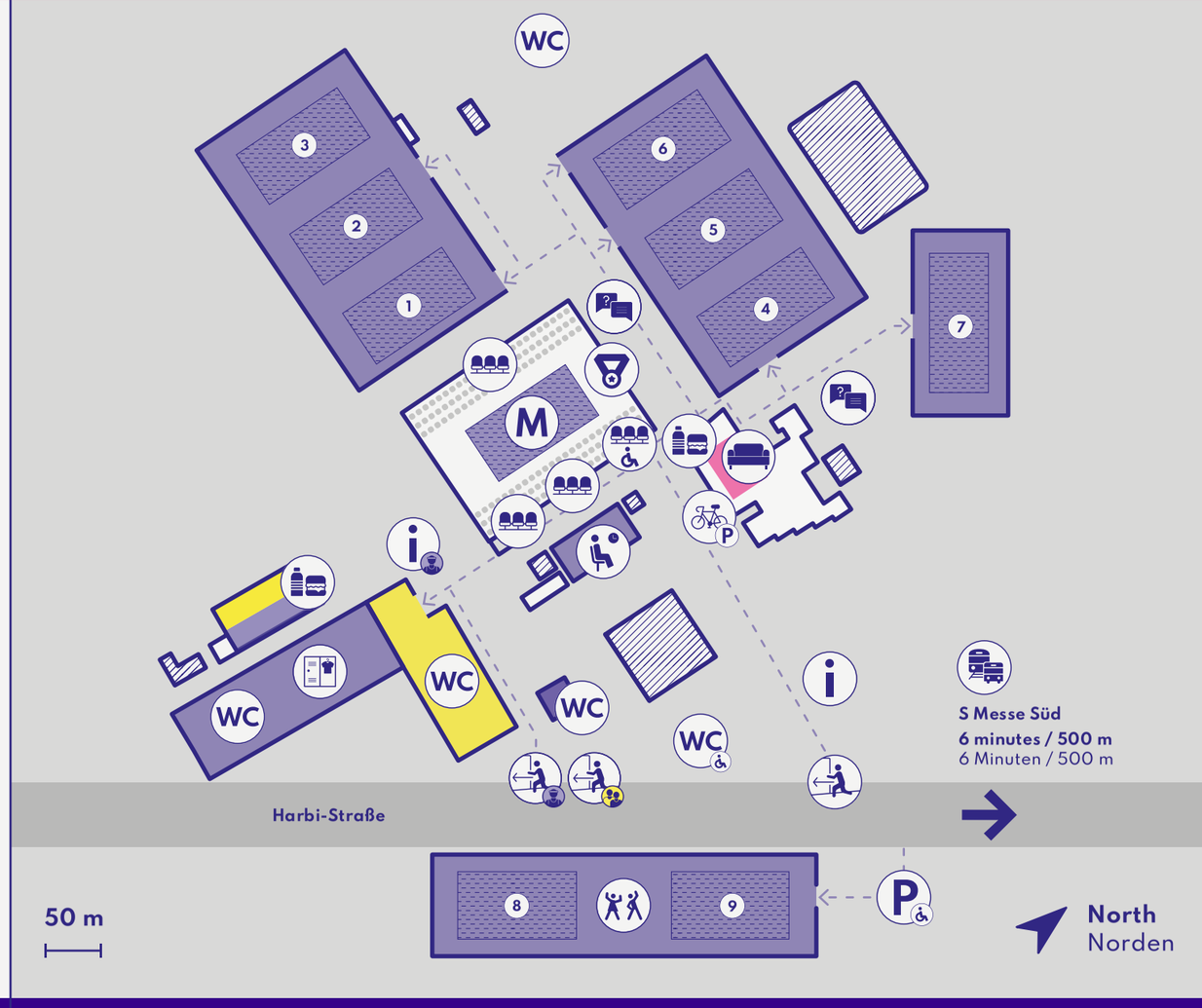
Disciplines:
- **Singles (Men/Women)**
- **Doubles (Men/Women/Mixed/Unified)**
- **Unified Sports Doubles (Men/Women/Mixed)**
- **Unified Sports Team Competition (2 athletes, 2 unified partners)**

Number of athletes: 109
Number of Unified Partners: 28
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 60

SC Brandenburg e.V. – Tennis

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Main Field of Play** Center Court
- **Lounge**
- **Toilets** Toiletten
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Athlete Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Athleten
- **Parking** Parkplatz
- **Award Ceremonies** Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Warm-Up Area** Aufwärm-Bereich
- **Food and Drink** Essen und Trinken
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Honored Guests and Families** Ehren-Gäste und Familien
- **Athlete** Athleten
- **Volunteer and Workforce** Helfer und Mitarbeiter
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld



#Unb

VOLLEYBALL

Sports Venues Description:
Halls 11.2, 18 and 20 of the Exhibition Center Berlin were the venues for the volleyball competitions. There were six competition courts and two warm-up courts. The courts conformed to the official volleyball regulations and were 28 meters long and 15 meters wide, measured from the inside edge of the boundary line.

Unified Sports Experience:
Held on June 25 with 4 teams, each consisting of 20 athletes and 22 guests.

Disciplines:
- Unified Competition Men
- Unified Competition Women
- Unified Competition Mixed

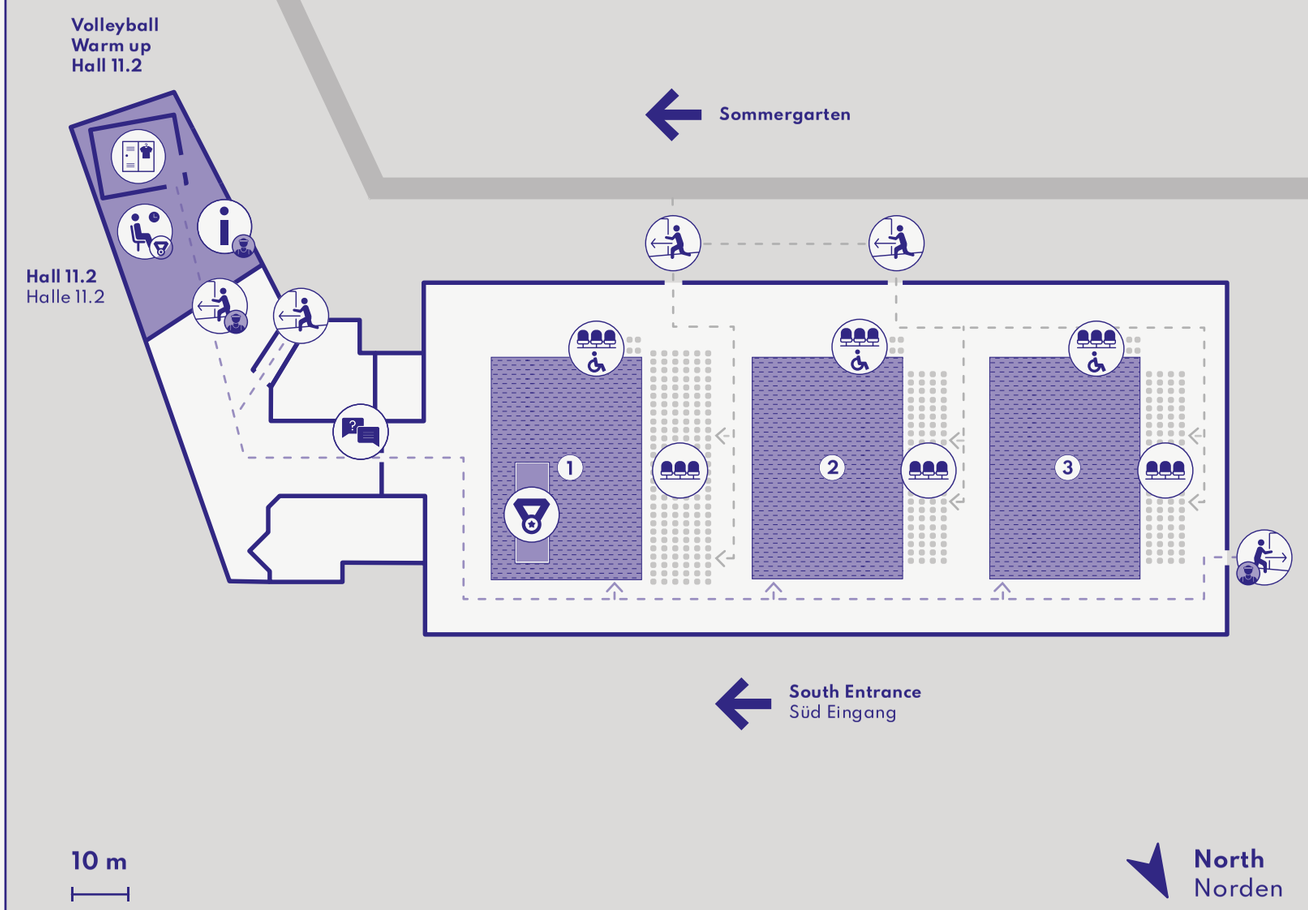
Number of athletes: 148
Number of Unified Partners: 125
Number of competitions/ceremonies: 6

Messe – Hall 18 – Volleyball

Messe – Halle 18 – Volleyball

Legend
Legende

- **Entry** Eingang
- **Exit** Ausgang
- **Seats** Sitzplätze
- **Interview Area** Interview-Bereich
- **Changing Room** Umkleide
- **Award Ceremony Waiting Area** Warte-Bereich Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Award Ceremonies** Sieger-Ehrungen
- **Info Point** Info Punkt
- **Sports Area** Spiel-Feld
- **Athlete** Athleten



20
8
5
SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
BERLIN 2023
TOYOTA

5.12 CLOSING CEREMONY

At the Closing Ceremony, athletes, their delegations, families, volunteers, honored guests and spectators celebrated their successes and encounters at the World Games against the impressive backdrop of the Brandenburg Gate.

Concept & Planning

For the structural framework, please refer to chapter 5.7 – Opening Ceremony. An explicit goal was to have both the Opening and Closing Ceremonies planned and executed by one agency for both the National Games and the World Games.

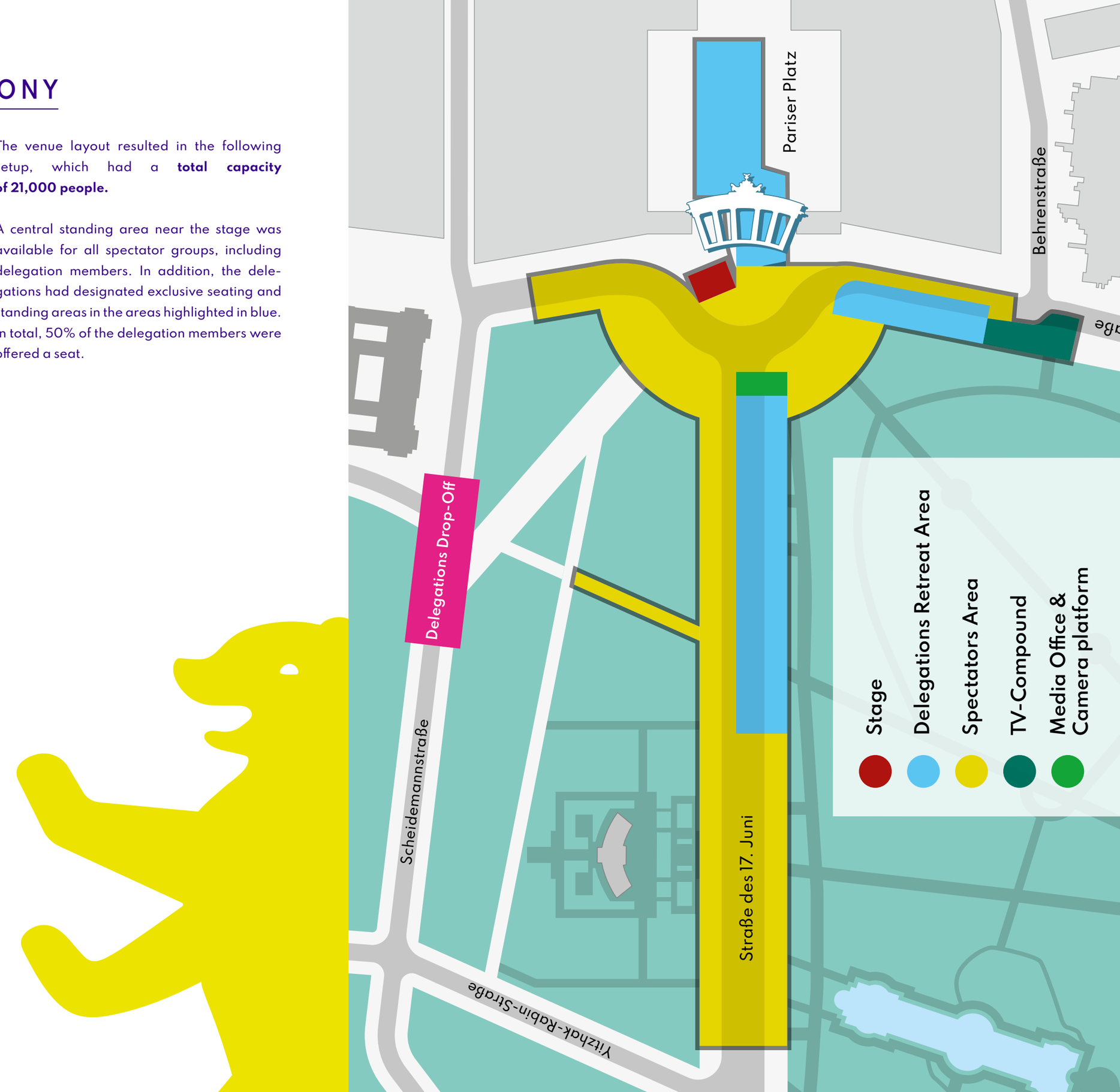
It was positive that the Brandenburg Gate served as the backdrop for the Closing Ceremony in both years, allowing many lessons learned from 2022 to be applied in 2023. It is also worth noting that the two contracted agencies – Mediapool and Phase 7 – have extensive and varied experience in staging events in and around the Brandenburg Gate.

In the conception of the event, the following requirements/conditions had to be reconciled:

- The event area of the Brandenburg Gate / Straße des 17. Juni offers relatively **little space for visitors** in the central line of sight. It was not possible to provide seating for all groups of visitors.
- At the same time, at least the athletes needed a place with some seating when they wanted to **"withdraw".**
- The main focus was supposed to be on the **joint celebration.** The official celebratory parts were to be minimized.
- The shared use of the event area for the **cycling competitions** was logistically challenging, although this combination was very successful from a content and overall perspective.
- Use of the stage and spectator area in the days leading up to the evening **highlights.**

The venue layout resulted in the following setup, which had a **total capacity of 21,000 people.**

A central standing area near the stage was available for all spectator groups, including delegation members. In addition, the delegations had designated exclusive seating and standing areas in the areas highlighted in blue. In total, 50% of the delegation members were offered a seat.



Execution & Program

The goal of an engaging program with a reduced celebratory part to minimize standing time was achieved with the following show sequence.

Show-Flow Abschlussfeier

TIME	DURATION	SHOWACT
18:00		**Doors Open**
18:00	04:00:00	**Walking Acts** Oakleaves until 22:00 Walking organ and Berlin bear until 20:30
18:00	00:03:00	**Walking Organ and Berlin bear**
18:03	00:50:00	**DJ Clarice**
		START OF EVENT
18:56	00:25:00	**Grande Fanfare**
19:23	00:25:00	**Just Fun**
19:52	00:25:00	**Ruhrpottbalkan**
20:22	00:06:00	**DTB Showgruppe Berne**
20:30	00:01:00	**Countdown** Moderation + 2 Mascots
		START OF OFFICIAL PART
20:31	00:18:00	**Parade of Athletes / Presentation of Signs** 2 pax per delegation, Vols as Stand-Ins
20:49	00:02:00	**Welcoming Words by Moderation**
20:51	00:03:00	**Highlight Video of World Games 2023** ca. 50 pax DTV on stage
20:54	00:01:00	**Moderation**
20:55	00:07:00	**Interview Situation with Politicians and Representatives SOD** 1. Svenja Schulze, Federal Minister for economic cooperation and development 2. Kai Wegner, Mayor of Berlin 3. Matthias Hoffmann, SOD Athlete4. Christiane Krajewski, SOD President
21:02	00:03:00	**Official Declaration that Games are clo-** sed by Executive Director SOI Mary Davis, executive Director SOI
21:05	00:03:00	**Moderation** asks Timothy Shriver, Sven Albrecht, Juliana Rößler and Italian Delegation on stage for Flag Handover
21:08	00:02:00	**Taking down SO Flag**
21:10	00:03:00	**Handing over SO Flag to Torino**
21:13	00:02:00	**Speech by Italian Representatives** Andrea Abodi, Ministry of Sport Speech and Greetings to Delegations with in-vitation to SOWG 2025 Turin,
21:15	00:04:00	**Creative Segment of Turin, „You gotta Fight“** Performance by two Italian singers
21:20	00:02:00	**Extinguishing of the SO Flame, Exiting of the SO Flame** SOD Global Ambassadors on stage
21:23	00:12:00	**Snap! (3 songs)**
21:37	00:15:00	**DJ Regard**
21:53	00:03:00	**Games Song** ca. 50 pax DTV on stage
21:56	00:03:00	**Finale with fireworks**
21:59		**End of Event**

Conclusions:

- The chosen layout and the sequence of events **met the needs identified.**
- Any other location than the Brandenburg Gate, the symbol of Berlin, would not have been suitable for the World Games.
- The spatial and thematic **connection with the cycling competitions and the highlight events** was more than appropriate in terms of public impact and cost considerations. This required integrated planning of all three aspects, which was done by the agency mediapool.
- Nevertheless, the various compromises made during the Closing Ceremony were noticed by the athletes. The Closing Ceremony was **rated as "Very good" by only 52%,** placing it in the middle of the pack compared to other event components and well behind the Opening Ceremony (85%).

After a moving Opening Ceremony in the Olympic Stadium, eight inspiring days of competition and many warm encounters, **the World Games came to a jubilant close.**

5.13 PARTICIPANTS AND GUESTS

Athletes

To be at the center of society and let differences fade into the background: For our athletes, participating in the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 was a dream come true. With their passion and incredible performances, they not only achieved sports excellence, but also inspired the world as ambassadors for inclusion and a level playing field for people with and without disabilities.

The host nation, the **Special Olympics Germany (SOG) team,** had the **largest delegation** at the World Games. The SOG team consisted of 354 athletes and 59 Unified Partners. The athletes were accompanied in Berlin by 133 coaches and other delegation members, for a total of 573 people.

Valery Vera is the **youngest athlete** at the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023, at 12 years old, from Paraguay and competing in rhythmic gymnastics.

The **oldest competitor** at the World Games is Raewyn Judson from New Zealand. She is 81 years old and the head coach of the bowling team.

176 delegations

5.822 athletes and Unified Partner

2.934 coaches & support staff

Volunteers

Without volunteers, there would have been no Special Olympics World Games 2023. 22,000 people applied for the volunteer program, and **18,000 volunteers from 126 nations** ultimately became part of the movement. They wholeheartedly supported the organization of the Special Olympics World Games 2023 and enthusiastically cheered on the 6,000 athletes. Volunteer requirements included a minimum age of 16, fluency in German or English, availability for at least five days, and participation in online training prior to the Games.

Of the 18,000 volunteers, **13,250 were deployed in Berlin,** while the remaining volunteers provided support at the Points of Entry, arrival airports, and at decentralized locations in the host cities. Volunteer assignments were diverse and included more than 20 task areas. These areas included:

- Accreditation
- Guest Services
- Catering
- Delegations
- Torch Run
- Families
- Healthy Athletes®
- Conferences & Congresses
- Logistics
- Marketing and Communications
- Media
- Special Olympics Festival
- Sports
- Sports Facilities
- Technology
- Tickets
- Transportation
- Accommodation
- Volunteer management
- Non-Competitive Offer
- Ceremonies

The following categories of volunteers deserve special mention.

Over **500 key volunteers** took on overarching organizational tasks and provided leadership to other volunteers. They served as a vital link between the various sites, the LOC team and the volunteers.

Approximately **1,400 so-called corporate volunteers** came from partner companies and supporters of the Special Olympics World Games 2023. Their companies gave them time off to participate in the World Games.

Inclusion was a lived reality for the **370 volunteers with disabilities,** including 65 in tandem teams. A tandem team consisted of two volunteers, one with a cognitive disability and one without. As a duo, they worked closely together and completed tasks together. Individuals could either choose tandem partners they already knew, or the LOC formed tandem teams that could work well together.

Another group of volunteers were the Delegation Assistant Liaisons (DALs). During the Special Olympics World Games 2023, nearly **300 DALs** accompanied and supported each of the 176 delegations from arrival to departure. Daily tasks of the DALs included cultural orientation, translation, and guiding delegations around the city and venues of Berlin. The DALs served as indispensable liaisons between the delegations and the LOC.

The implementation of the seven disciplines of the **Healthy Athletes®** program required many helping hands. Of the **1,800 supporting volunteers,** approximately 80% had a professional (dental) medical background. In addition, 15 clinical directors volunteered as expert leaders of the individual Healthy Athletes® disciplines.

The **German Foundation for Engagement and Volunteering** (Deutsche Stiftung für Engagement und Ehrenamt) played a major role in the success of the volunteer program. Since 2021, the LOC has received substantial support from this foundation through extensive funding and grants. This support enabled the implementation of measures early in the planning process, primarily measures attributed to the volunteer sector. Early planning facilitated by the funding included digitalization of the registration and selection process, which allowed for over 22,000 volunteer applications. Measures were also put in place to promote inclusive volunteering in Germany, ensuring that people with disabilities could participate in this important social sector. Other key activities included raising awareness and motivating children and young people to volunteer, developing campaigns to recruit volunteers for the Games and creating training modules.

63,4%
Female volunteers

36,2%
Male volunteers

0,4%
Diverse

34,57%
Volunteers from Berlin

83,19%
Volunteers from Germany

16,81%
International Volunteers

4.336
Volunteers in age group 16–25

70,49%
First timers for volunteering

43.000
Total number of T-shirts distributed

61.660
Total number shifts – confirmed

55.356
Total number of shifts – attended

413.400 Stunden
Number of Hours committed by volunteers at shifts

VOLUNTEER
VOLUNTEER
VOLUNTEER
VOLUNTEER
VOLUNTEER
#ZusammenUnschlagbar
#UnbeatableTogether

Guests of Honor

The World Games welcomed many guests of honor from the political community, business sector and public life, as well as long-time partners and supporters of Special Olympics. A total of **4,315 guests of honor** were registered for the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023. The Grand Opening of the World Games at the Olympic Stadium was not an event to be missed! 2,000 guests of honor gathered to welcome the athletes and experience the fantastic program, which integrated performances by the Blue Man Group and Madcon with the official Games song.

On the evening of June 19, **German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier** officially opened the Special Olympics World Games. **Chancellor Olaf Scholz** and **Governing Mayor Kai Wegner** also attended and cheered on the athletes from the stands. A special highlight was the presence of **sports legends Dirk Nowitzki** and **Felix Neureuther,** who joined the athletes on stage.

The program for the guests of honor was varied and offered opportunities to meet and actively participate. Guests had the opportunity to walk in with the athletes during the Opening Ceremony, present medals to the athletes at the awards ceremonies, or participate in the "Unified Sports® Experience" on the field with the athletes.

Attending sports competitions was especially popular. **Dirk Nowitzki** attended the final training session for the German 3x3 National Basketball Team, joined them in practice and wished them luck in the upcoming competitions.

Athletics icon Bob Beamon has been involved with the Special Olympics movement since its inception and wouldn't let the World Games in Berlin pass him by. Although his team finished last in the Unified Experience relay, Beamon proudly wore his participation ribbon among all the athletes.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz attended a women's handball game in the Olympic Park and presented medals to the athletes.

Soccer World Cup Champion Philipp Lahm and **DFB Vice President Célia Sasic,** who had already attended the Special Olympics National Games 2022, dropped in on seven events at the World Games.

"Special Olympics isn't just about winning or losing; it's about athletes coming together and having the opportunity to play sports and learn from sports, just like I did"

Dirk Nowitzki

In addition to those mentioned, many other guests of honor created connections between people of diverse backgrounds and abilities, lasting friendships, inclusive networks and visibility for athletes and their achievements.

Family Program

Athletes' family members have a special place at Special Olympics events. The World Games offered a special family program for the families accompanying the athletes. In addition to free admission to the competitions, rest areas were provided in the lounges for guests of honor and families. A separate family reception at the Berlin Zoo provided the setting for an intensive exchange between family members. The program was complemented by a series of lectures called "Family Talks".

A total of **5,454 family members** registered for the program.

Viewers

For the first time at the World Games, a **ticketing concept** was implemented for a large number of competition venues. This included the event clusters at the Exhibition Center (Messe), the Olympic Park and the swimming competitions in the Swimming and Diving Hall (SSE). The range of ticket options included day tickets at regular prices of €8, family tickets for €24 and weekly tickets for €32. Tickets for the Opening Ceremonies ranged from €15 to €35 depending on the seating category.

All tickets included **free use of public transportation.**

A special offer was the **"Fans in the Stands"** program, which was specially tailored for schools, clubs and organized groups. Participants were able to visit the Games free of charge on a prearranged day, experience inclusion first-hand and celebrate the athletes' successes.
The program was complemented by customized pre-Games information sessions.

Spectator categories

To make the **competitions easy to attend,** spectators had free access to sports offers in the city center, including cycling competitions at the Brandenburg Gate, street basketball in connection with the Special Olympics Festival, the festival itself, and competitions at individual sports venues for golf, water sports, and beach volleyball.

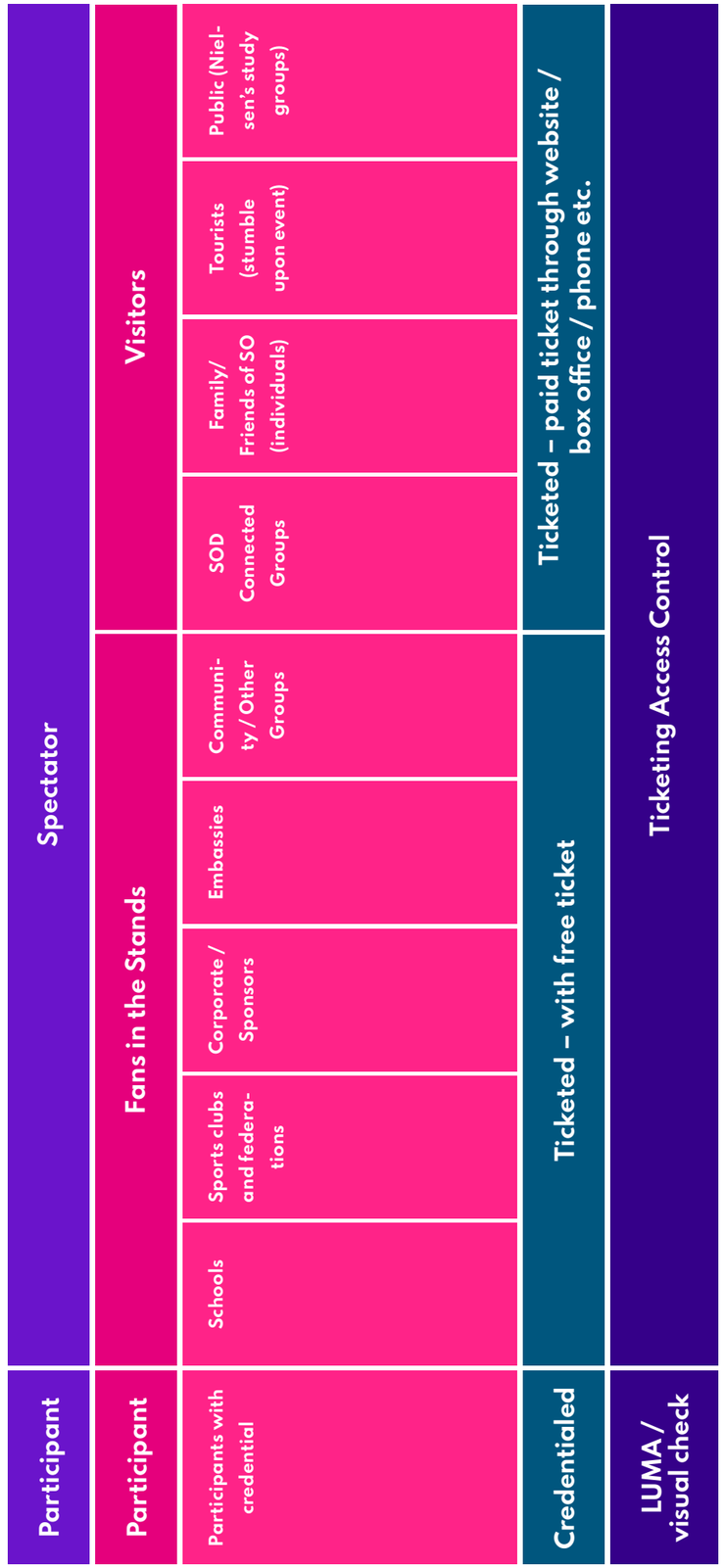
In addition to the ticket offers, the Spectator Services team provided additional services that benefited all groups of Games participants: information points, lost and found, mobility services, accessibility services, and seating and access regulations for all participants of the Opening Ceremony.

In total, the World Games ticketing system processed 109,692 transactions. Approximately 20,000 people participated in the Fans in The Stands program. When all individual events, competitions and free offers are taken into account, approximately **330,000 guests** were counted.

While it is important to be cautious about painting an overly positive picture, it can be said that the generation of enthusiasm among the Berlin public was successful. At times, some of the halls on the exhibition grounds had to be closed due to overcrowding.

The decision to issue paid tickets for the World Games in Berlin was the right one, even if it meant a considerable effort in terms of motivating the public.

The original target of 80,000 "fans in the stands" proved to be overly optimistic.



5.14 ACCESSIBILITY

"The most inclusive Games ever" was always the team's goal. However, it quickly became evident that this was no easy task.

It took understanding, expertise and a willingness to work "across areas, functions and departments" to make this a reality throughout the event. Barriers had to be broken down at various levels, both in the sports events and in the accompanying programs, such as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, the Special Olympics festivals and the congresses.

The aspect of accessibility from the perspective of people with intellectual disabilities is not sufficiently considered in everyday life. The World Games were able to provide important ideas, particularly in the areas of access to information, participation in events, orientation and signage systems at all venues, public transport and digital innovations in leisure and health.

In order to deliver the most inclusive Games ever, the following accessible services were provided free of charge to let everyone participate in the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023.

Accessible Audio Stream: The LOC provided accessible audio stream equipment so that people who are blind or visually impaired could follow the games from the stands. This service was also available to people who did not have in-depth knowledge of the sports and wanted additional information. The audio stream was provided for the Opening Ceremony, Closing Ceremony and eight sports. In addition, the audio description was provided in the form of an app for those who could only follow the Special Olympics World Games 2023 from home. Simulation glasses were also provided for those who did not have a visual impairment but wanted to experience what it feels like to have one. This provided an important personal experience for anyone interested.

Sign language interpreting was provided for both the accompanying program (congresses, receptions, festivals) and the sports events so that deaf and hard-of-hearing people could follow the games.

Speech-to-Text Interpretation: Speech-to-text interpretation in German and English was provided on large screens at the Opening and Closing Ceremonies so that deaf and hard-of-hearing people who did not understand sign language could follow the event.

Simultaneous Interpretation: Simultaneous interpretation was provided primarily at the congresses. The Global Athlete Congress was translated into five languages over five days, and the Global Forum for Inclusion was translated into all six official Special Olympics languages plus Easy English and Easy German by 22 interpreters.

Accessible parking was available at all venues.

Sensory Backpacks: Sensory backpacks were provided on-site for individuals who felt overwhelmed by the crowded and noisy environment.

Quiet and Prayer Rooms: To escape the busy and hectic environment, rooms for relaxation, meditation, prayer, or simply a moment of solitude were available at all venues. Each room was accessible and equipped with yoga mats, ear muffs and sensory toys.

Wheelchair Use and Rental: Designated seating for wheelchair users was available at each venue, and wheelchairs could be rented at the information desk if needed.

Easy Maps: Signage for a major event is a complex issue. The LOC tried to prioritize and implement accessibility in its determination of the design for the overall signage, color selection, font size and type, and naming of individual areas in Easy Language. In addition to "regular" signage and directions, there were "Easy Maps" that provided a "simple" and clear overview of venues and spaces.

Accessible Event App: The goal was to develop the most accessible app possible, based on various inputs from accessibility groups and the athletes themselves to identify priority areas for accessible design. The goal was also to ensure that the app was a one-stop shop for all important information about the World Games, including real-time data on competitions and award ceremonies.

Temporary Structural Measures: Because some venues were protected as historic landmarks and the LOC was unable to make them permanently accessible, the LOC worked with temporary measures to make these areas more accessible for the Games:

- Critical flooring was leveled or reinforced with appropriate floor protection panels.
- Additional accessible toilets were installed (51 accessible toilet cabins, 20 accessible toilet containers), and all-access toilets were also available at Wannsee and Maifeld.
- Temporary ramps were built and additional wheelchair spaces were created. Wheelchair-accessible elements were used in necessary cable bridges to avoid new barriers due to temporary power and water supplies.
- In addition, a team of technical runners was deployed during the Games to work closely with the accessibility team to implement ad-hoc structural measures where additional barriers were identified.

Communication in Easy Language: A particular concern was to provide accessible text and speech for athletes, visitors and LOC colleagues. This applied to both the preparation phase of the Games and the execution of the Games themselves. Considerable effort was put into creating documents in Easy Language. Examples include the Athlete Handbook, the volunteer registration and this final report. Simultaneous translation into Easy Language was an established process during committee meetings, working group meetings, and various online formats during the coronavirus pandemic.

Conclusions

It should go without saying that Special Olympics events are as accessible as possible. To achieve this goal, accessibility should be considered in the selection of venues during the bidding process. Temporary measures are unsustainable and costly, and often 100% satisfactory solutions are not possible. Currently, historic preservation often takes precedence over the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Additionally, there should be a collective commitment within the LOC from the beginning to make the whole event inclusive and accessible. This should include appropriate staffing and experience, both in the venue and in spectator services and operations, as it requires an organization-wide approach. And: It requires a budget. Documents in Easy Language, interpretations of various kinds – temporary measures cost money, and it is only when they are implemented throughout the entire event, be it a sports or non-sports event, that they have an impact and create an event for everyone. When thinking about the sustainable impact of a sports event, there must also be the ability to provide awareness-raising workshops for external service providers, partners, sponsors and future event organizers so that these concepts can be meaningfully perpetuated. Accessibility is not a nice add-on; it should be a basic requirement. Unfortunately, SOI (Special Olympics International) has not provided any requirements or empirical findings regarding accessibility, so LOCs can easily dismiss it as an add-on. This should be changed for the sake of the athletes and visitors, and as a best practice for the event world and the coexistence of people with and without disabilities.

Johannes Stolze as an accessible scout

Johannes Stolze from Berlin was a Tandem volunteer at the World and National Games.
He shares his experiences as an Accessible Scout at the Games.

Preparing to volunteer at Special Olympics

Since my dad was driving me around town one Monday, we spontaneously decided to go to the radio tower to pick up my volunteer supplies for work at Special Olympics 2023. My role as a Special Olympics volunteer was to evaluate the accessibility of the events.

The route to pick up the volunteer badge and T-shirt was well marked and visible. However, the organizers could have done more in some areas. For example, we wanted to use an elevator, but it didn't work. My father had to leave me alone for a while to get help. Some time later, he returned with a black-haired woman wearing an orange vest, and she showed us another elevator on the other side. She also told us that more than 10,000 volunteers had registered, but not all of them had arrived yet. They arrived gradually throughout the week.

Everything in the hall was well organized. Each step was numbered. Everyone handled their job with dedication and worked as a team. My father was also amazed at how well they worked. I had to have a photo taken for my volunteer ID, which went smoothly, but the chaperon also needed a day pass. It turned out that my chaperon's name was not in the system. It took over an hour to get everything straightened out. And then I finally got my volunteer T-shirt from a very nice young lady.

Trip to the Opening Ceremony of Special Olympics 2023 at the Olympic Stadium

The organization of the trip went smoothly. The organizers and staff had everything under control. We met up with other residents of the group homes in a schoolyard at the Johannesstift. Everyone was in a good mood and happy to experience something like this in Berlin. Around 4:30 PM, a convoy drove to the Olympic Stadium. The convoy of 5 cars started and ended at the Olympic Stadium with a honking concert. Nobody could wait for it to start. I got goose bumps when we set off and when we arrived at the Olympic Stadium. When we parked, I saw that the parking lot was still completely empty. So we were the only people there at that time, but we had arrived very early.

Before the Opening Ceremony started

After we all got out of the car, we took a group photo and shot some videos of ourselves in the Olympic Stadium while we improvised a La-O-La wave. Again, I got goose bumps. Then we went through the entrance. Our groups went to their seats. We were there two hours before the start, and I could feel the excitement building as more people arrived. The stadium looked like a big bowl. There was a warm-up band that got the crowd in a good mood. We sang along to a song called "Are you ready." It was composed for Special Olympics 2023. The band performed a special choreography and we all practiced it together. The song was also played on the following days. All the spectators always sang along loudly and applauded when the song was played.

The Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony began at 8:00 PM, and athletes from 190 nations gradually entered the Olympic Stadium. Each country ran an honorary lap around the track, and then reached their seats in various ways, including by wheelchair.

Each country was cheered, sometimes more, sometimes less. The parade of nations lasted, believe it or not, two hours, and then the moderator greeted the honorary guests, including Federal President Steinmeier and Federal Chancellor Scholz. Announcements were made in both German and English. Then there was a laser show, and a choir performed. Between the main acts there were announcements explaining what Special Olympics is about. Most of this was in English.

Then a person with the "Flame of Hope" torch entered the athletes' track and lit the flame. Even before Special Olympics began, the three-day torch run in Fürstenwalde started on Wednesday. The run is a fundraising campaign by police officers for the Special Olympics – police officers, along with international athletes, carried the Olympic torch through Brandenburg and Berlin.

At the end of the evening, there was a big fireworks display. The event was supposed to last from 8:00 PM to 10:30 PM, but it went on for an extra hour. rbb broadcast the event. After it ended, everyone left the Olympic Stadium with enthusiasm, which I could see, and it left a great impression on me.

The first day of Special Olympics

Monday, June 19, 2023, was the first day of Special Olympics. We drove from Johannesstift to the fairgrounds. When we got there, we first had to find a parking space. Then we went inside together, and I was happy to see that people were in a good mood.

First, we looked at all the sports activities we could participate in. We got involved in some of them. I did welly throwing with the help of a supervisor, one of the people in charge. She mentioned that there was a map of the different stations that you could try. She also said that it didn't matter if you did several stations or just one. I should do what I liked and that was the can and welly throwing. Then I threw paper airplanes through rings. I realized that I had only gotten a stamp from one station, but even that was enough for a gold medal. The people who ran the awards ceremony celebrated enthusiastically. They never stopped clapping, dancing and playing music.

My role as a volunteer

On **Wednesday,** I got ready for work early in the morning. That means I put on my Special Olympics T-shirt and hung my badge around my neck. At 11:00 AM, the shuttle service arrived to pick me up. The driver wasn't quite sure where to go. I told him to try to get to Masurenallee. He wanted to talk with my father, who was already there, about the location of the entrance. My father was then called. The bus driver had only "Messe" on his instructions. When I got there, my father picked me up. Then we went to Hall 21 and had to find Hall 10. That was the meeting place.

There we met a very young woman with brown hair. She came up to us and showed us around. The cafeteria had a break area and a ping-pong table that was only for volunteers. And then we bumped into Katharina, who had worked with me in 2022 to check the accessibility of the stadium. I was so happy to see her.

As she was leaving, we met Daniela. She was our group leader for the accessibility theme we were to explore on Wednesday and Thursday. We discussed what to do that day. She had some signs that we were going to put up in places that were not accessible.

Daniela spotted the first barrier right at the beginning. It was an elevator that was hard to find because of the poor signage in the hall. Daniela took a photo of it. After that we left Hall 10 and walked towards the summer garden. Instantly, we saw only stairs. Daniela suspected that we would find an accessible route if we went straight ahead. Since the route was not well marked, we put up a sign. We walked in a circle and checked if everything was accessible; for example, we looked at the toilets. They were accessible. We also went into the other halls to see how they looked. We did wheelchair test runs, and Daniela occasionally did test sits as well.

We also visited the hall where there were interactive activities. We noticed a large step there that we thought was a tripping hazard. Daniela took two photos as evidence and sent them to the WhatsApp group "Team Accessibility/Barrier-Free".

Then we met two colleagues, one of whom, the man, was deaf. He used sign language to communicate about his experience on the site.

We talked about what else we wanted to do. He wanted to go to the volleyball courts. On the way to the volleyball courts, we noticed some unclear signs. We tried to mark these things with tape and a marker.

There were three courts in the volleyball hall. The atmosphere was great and it was very loud. Unfortunately, it was not accessible in the sense that you had to be careful not to get hit by the ball in some areas. We couldn't find a designated spot for wheelchair users. Fortunately, I was able to stand on the sidelines and watch the game. We also visited the hall where the basketball competitions were taking place. The atmosphere there was also good. The spectators were all chanting "Germany, Germany." I could feel the determination of the basketball players.

We noticed that the halls were not clearly numbered. Fortunately, we had some numbers with us, so we could solve the problem right away. The deaf man took a chair and stood on it. A blond woman helped him make the numbers visible everywhere. The next day the signs were still there.

The second day as an accessible scout

On **Thursday,** we first went to the cafeteria to check if everything was accessible. My dad got food there, and I, from a wheelchair user's perspective, assessed whether the height of the food counter was wheelchair-friendly. Everything was fine. Then, by chance, we met a speaker at the food counter, and Daniela, who knew him, introduced me as her assistant. He asked us if everything was accessible and where the problems were. After the interview we looked for a table, but we didn't see any wheelchair spots.

Daniela took some evidence photos at the lunch table from a wheelchair user's perspective, and sent them back to the WhatsApp group. She wrote that there were no wheelchair spots here. Shortly thereafter, Katharina from the WhatsApp group claimed that there were supposedly wheelchair spots in the cafeteria. We took a closer look, but there was no sign of any so-called good wheelchair spots.

The rest of the day we watched judo, table tennis and badminton. We didn't know where the entrance to the table tennis area was, so we went through the back entrance. Daniela had mentioned earlier that we were from the accessibility group and were inspecting everything. The back entrance led to the area where the table tennis athletes gathered before the competition. It was quite something to see the backstage area where the warm-up took place. Soon we found the right entrance. Then we checked if everything in the table tennis area was accessible.

We also visited the place where the weightlifting would take place. There was a platform with a good view of the surroundings. You could drive up a ramp. When we arrived at the platform, a video was shown on the big screen, including the soccer player Thomas Mueller. Thomas Mueller said that the World Games for Inclusion were very important and that it was very special for him to be part of Special Olympics. He emphasized the need for continued efforts to promote inclusion after the Games. He also mentioned that the European Football Championship would take place next year and encouraged us to volunteer. They would need about 100,000 volunteers for the European Championship.

The last day of Special Olympics 2023

On the evening of the last day of Special Olympics, Saturday, as we were driving to the Closing Ceremony, I listened to a radio interview with Jürgen Dusel, the federal government's Commissioner for the Disabled, about Special Olympics. He said that hosting the Special Olympics in Berlin was already a great success and a positive sign for inclusion. He also stated that there is still work to be done to make Berlin more accessible. For example, making elevators more accessible was important. He also mentioned that we need to achieve more in terms of accessibility in the city and in the stadiums by the time of the European Championships in 2024.

As we approached the city center, making our way towards Brandenburg Gate, we saw many nice, friendly and happy people. My dad walked with me for a while because we couldn't find a parking space.

I could hear the music from far away. It made me happy. After showing our tickets, we went inside. I had won the ticket through my volunteer work.

When it was 8:00 PM, the welcome ceremony began, unfortunately mostly in English, with only some parts translated. And then there was a shorter entry parade with signs, and this time, fortunately, it didn't last 2 hours like at the Opening Ceremony. Maybe just half an hour or 20 minutes.

When the moderators thanked the volunteers, I cried tears of joy. I was both happy and sad. The time was so special and I was a little sad that it was over.

After a while, it got a little too loud for me right in front of the stage. My dad went to get some earplugs. Later my father asked if it was still too loud for me, which I confirmed. Then he took me to one side, and I watched the program on the video screen. I was still a little sad.

After that, my father turned me around, and there were Daniela and Katharina. They immediately noticed my sadness at the end of Special Olympics. I asked them if we could take a picture. Then I felt better.

Towards the end, a DJ came on stage. He played electronic music. He mixed all the hits together. "Are you ready" by Madcon was also included. At the end, Madcon performed the song live and there were beautiful fireworks.

I was very impressed by the dedication and willingness of the many volunteers and athletes. "Are you ready?" Yes, I would be ready for the next Special Olympics. Unfortunately, it will be a while before the games return to Berlin, but I am hopeful that Berlin will bid again for the National Games in 2026.

Johannes Stolze

5.15 GREENER GAMES

Background and Scope

The ambition to think green and reduce the carbon footprint was an integral part of the vision for the Berlin World Games.

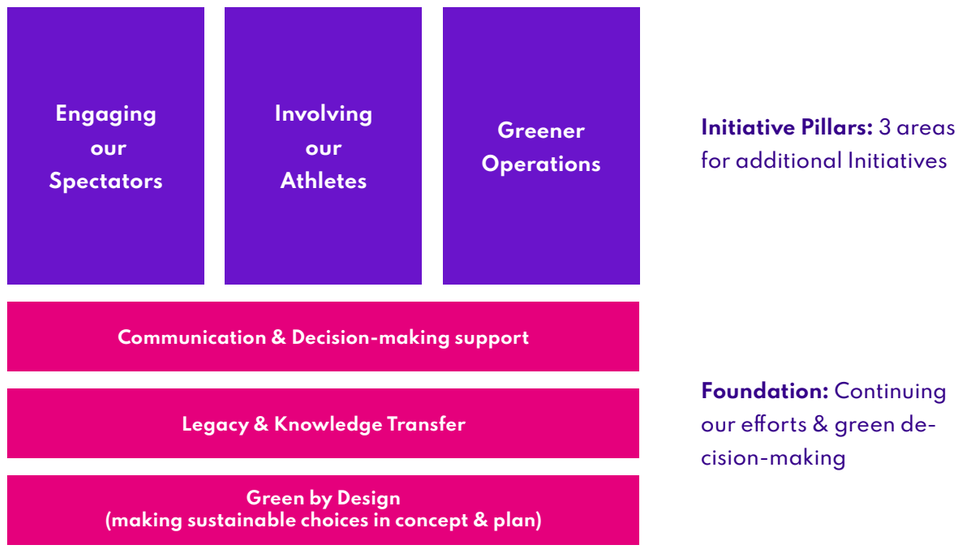
The strategy and scope of the Greener Games can be broadly divided into two categories of activity:

- A collective, comprehensive LOC responsibility to consider and reduce environmental impacts wherever possible by challenging and improving existing operational plans: Ultimately, it was necessary to ensure that the "greenest feasible option" was chosen, taking into account other priorities such as budget and athlete well-being. This effort was called "Greener by Design," and was foundational, alongside the goal of sharing the empirical findings from the Games for the future.
- Identifying and leveraging opportunities beyond the operational aspects to **raise awareness,** educate and engage stakeholders through a range of additional initiatives, including online promotion of the issue, communication materials for manuals, apps and websites, and on-site distribution of information.

The name of this strategy, **"Greener Games,"** was a deliberate decision to acknowledge that the World Games would undoubtedly have an impact on the environment and that our efforts and actions to address this would not lead to completely green games (e.g., in terms of CO2 neutrality), but at least to greener games than in the past.

At the LOC, the implementation of this strategy was supported by an **interdisciplinary working group,** occasionally led by an intern and a coordinator. Structurally, these staff members were integrated into the Operations department and reported to the respective director. The working group identified and discussed various measures that would contribute to the goal of "greener" Games, and then examined the feasibility and impact to determine the final scope. As there was **no dedicated budget** for the strategy, cost-effective initiatives had to be considered and prioritized within the existing framework. This meant that the focus was on embedding ideas and initiatives into existing FA scopes, plans and roadmaps.

The three pillars of the Greener Games Initiative



Greener Games: „Greener by Design"

Below are some examples of "Greener by Design" elements in our plans and concepts:

1. A **"veggie first"** buffet at catering locations means that the vegetarian meal is offered first to customer groups before the meat option can be selected. Our largest caterer, with eight locations, reported that this concept worked very well and resulted in an increase in the consumption of vegetarian meals.
2. We encouraged our caterers to aim for **30% organic** and 50% locally sourced ingredients. Our largest caterer achieved the 30% target and managed to source **80% of the ingredients from local Berlin suppliers.**
3. Emphasis was placed on **reducing air travel** for delegations within Germany, and all delegations with an average travel time of less than eight hours from their Host Towns to Berlin were transported by bus or train. Delegation leaders and DALs were transported exclusively by train from Berlin to the Host Towns.
4. Our entire T1 and T2 fleet (owned and shared) consisted of **hybrid or fully electric Toyota vehicles.**
5. The use of Berlin's existing public transportation system was strongly encouraged, especially for spectators, volunteers and family members. Each accredited person attending the Games was provided with an ABC fare zone **combi-ticket** for the duration of their accreditation. Delegations were also encouraged to use the existing system to supplement delegation bus schedules (routes were kept to a minimum to use the existing transportation system during off-peak hours). These decisions were integrated into the existing plans of the FA Transportation and contributed to achieving the 75% target use of public transportation. This target was exceeded, with a total of 79% of respondents after the World Games reporting that they used public transportation to travel between venues in Berlin. By comparison, only 2% used taxis and 4% drove. 6% of respondents used the Games Shuttle mentioned in point 4 above.
6. During the National Games Berlin 2022, the Merchandising Team initiated an **upcycling initiative** to creatively use and reuse leftover merchandise and equipment materials.
7. Our decision to **use existing venues** had a positive impact on reducing CO2 emissions; no new venues were built for the World Games in Berlin, unlike other multisport events.
8. Environmental considerations were an integral part of our procurement strategy. Examples include our requirements for purchased textiles, the consideration of environmental impacts when purchasing or renting materials, the tendering of energy-saving components in the technology sector, the use of green energy and the avoidance of PVC materials wherever possible. In the evaluation of bids, environmental aspects accounted for between 5% and 10% of the rating points.

Hollywood-Glamour
#Zusammen
Unschlagbar
VBB
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BERLIN 2023
Video-überwachung

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Energy and water consumption at the venues depended largely on the existing contracts between the venue operators and their suppliers. In total, 3 million kWh of energy and 18,000 m^3 of water were consumed at all venues during the operating period. This equates to approximately 1,600 tons of CO2 equivalents for the event operations.

We generated **168 tons of waste** in various fractions at our venues, equivalent to 586 tons of CO2, and made a conscious effort to recycle food waste. Plastic bottles (Coca-Cola) were collected in separate bins and picked up by Coca-Cola as part of the deposit program. 80% of respondents to the customer satisfaction survey said that waste disposal at the venues was "easy" or "very easy" to understand.

Greener Games "Pillars": Additional Initiatives

Ende 2022 wurde vereinbart, dass zusätzliche Initiativen unterstützt werden sollten, um unsere Kundengruppen einzubinden und umweltfreundlichere Dienstleistungen (operative Dienstleistungen) anzubieten. Dies führte dazu, dass die folgenden Initiativen in die Tat umgesetzt wurden:

1. **Cycle-to-the-Games Challenge:**
   This challenge was announced to all Games attendees, but was particularly relevant to visitors from Berlin. Anyone who cycled to one of the Games venues, took a photo and presented it to the Spectator Services Helpdesk, could enter a prize draw for World Games merchandise. Unfortunately, awareness of the challenge was not high enough for it to be successful. Only 3% of Games visitors used bicycles to travel between venues.
   However, customer surveys showed that 66% of respondents rated Berlin's urban cycling infrastructure (bike lanes, parking) as very good or good, while 34% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
2. **Optional CO2 offsetting** for ticket buyers in the online ticket shop: More than €1,700 was raised for Naturschutzbund Deutschland (Environmental Protection Association Germany) after the online ticket shop was successfully configured to allow ticket buyers to offset their CO2 emissions by purchasing €1 donation "tickets." This option could have been promoted more actively on social media (e.g., as part of a campaign to raise awareness of the Games' carbon footprint) to achieve a higher purchase rate.
3. Inclusion of a **"Sustainability Passport"** in the Athlete Handbook to encourage athletes to engage in "green activities" and make the issue tangible and fun. Athletes were offered a series of green challenges, such as choosing to eat vegetarian for a day, recycling their plastic waste, or refilling their water bottle at a water fountain, which they could mark as completed. Once the list of activities was completed, athletes were entered into a raffle to win a goodie bag of merchandise.
4. Partnership with the company Bolt to provide **"last mile" transportation** from public transportation stations to venues: This service was supported by the spectator service and operated largely independently of Bolt. Bolt created new pick-up and drop-off zones for spectators and visitors to easily access mobility services. Electric scooters and bicycles were provided. This also helped to encourage the use of public transportation, as mentioned above, which was a key goal of the LOC.
5. Temporary installation of **drinking fountains** at venues in Berlin: In early 2023, it was agreed to allocate additional funds for the installation of approximately 10 drinking water fountains in our sports facilities, wherever possible, based on agreements with venues, water supply companies and technical planners. This strategy was intended to complement the refillable water bottle provided to all delegation members and volunteers and to encourage a reduction in the use of plastic bottles during the Games. Unfortunately, the installation and testing of the drinking fountains proved to be a significant challenge, and most of the fountains were not operational during the Games.

Water, Power, Waste at our Games Venues

	Waste	Power	Water
Quantity used	168.000 kg	3 Mio. kWh	18.000 kl
	x	x	x
CO_2e per quantity (in kg)	3,5	0,468	10,6
	=	=	=
CO_2 equivalents (in t)	586	1.396	186
	↓	↓	↓
	17.500 €	42.000 €	5.500 €

Visitor Feedback

In general, visitors welcomed the idea of a "Greener Games" initiative. However, the most common feedback from the survey was the lack of visibility and insufficient communication in regards to the various initiatives.

- There was a call for a greater focus on **reducing single-use plastic bottles** from beverage partner Coca-Cola and replacing them with reusable bottles, as well as providing more water refill stations. Suggestions were made to clearly communicate the presence of drinking water at all taps and restrooms in Germany. Given the LOC's difficulties with the installation of drinking fountains (see above), this was a point that should have been better reflected in our plans, but could not be practically implemented.
- There was a call for more focus on **educating international visitors** about local waste management and recycling systems. Many were unfamiliar with the German "deposit" system for recycling plastic bottles, others did not know how to separate their waste using the bins provided, and requested additional information in various languages (including Easy Language).
- Visitors felt that there were **too few disposal bins** and areas at the venues.
- To improve the use of public transportation, visitors wanted more information on typical travel times and routes between key venues. They also suggested the creation of shuttles between public transportation stops and the venues (in some cases, the distances were long) and the inclusion of appropriate training for volunteers to use them as multipliers to assist other guests.

Lessons Learned and recommendations

- The "start at home" campaign, which focused on promoting **more sustainable behavior in the LOC office routine** (such as more paperless processes, managing office energy consumption, etc.), was only **moderately successful.** A full transition to digital processes and elimination of paper was not possible due to some formal requirements. Influencing energy consumption, especially in terms of ventilation, air conditioning and heating, could not be addressed due to technical and contractual cons-

traints. As a result, measures taken in the office environment were "mostly cosmetic."

- Environmentally sustainable options often competed with economic considerations, such as higher costs for organic products or locally sourced goods. In addition, there were situations where the needs of athletes took precedence. Offering an exclusive "Veggie-Day" conflicted with the dietary requirements of various sports, and air travel within Germany could not be entirely avoided.
- Fortunately, there were several areas where economic and environmental goals could be aligned, particularly with respect to competition venues, for example.
- There is room for ecological optimization in the area of beverage partnerships, with refill systems and reusable systems being keywords.
- However, without the return system for disposable packaging in place, the amount of waste would have been significantly higher.
- Allocating a budget and a small team of experts and consultants (similar to the accessibility theme) is essential to move the agenda and goals forward. Without this, environmental goals will remain a secondary priority. In terms of team alignment, this could also be placed under "legacy," with a responsible individual accountable for the roadmap and goals.
- Setting specific, measurable goals:
  The formulation of the environmental goals was quite limited, in part due to a lack of benchmarks and in part because the structures of the Greener Games Initiative were still evolving during the planning process.
  Comprehensive **data collection and environmental controlling did not take place,** but would be necessary for long-term optimization.
- Awareness of the Cycle-to-the-Games initiative was limited.This underscores the importance of actively promoting the initiative to the right groups prior to the event, and doing so through various media, and as part of travel information to the Games and on-site for returning visitors.
- A key takeaway from visitor feedback is the need for significantly increased awareness and communication, especially with the international audience.
- **Improvements are needed in signage** (e.g., trash cans), better support through volunteers, and more attention to visitor information.
- Overall, there was a strong consensus among visitors that the "Greener Games" concept should be accompanied by a greater focus on reducing plastic packaging and waste. Many felt that the use of PET bottles, the lack of a reusable bottle policy, the lack of refill stations, and the lack of efforts to reduce packaging at snack and food stations (e.g., yogurt, take-out containers) represented a double standard.
- **Water fountains/stations** are a critical element of beverage provision and were planned for the World Games. Based on the negative experiences described above, several recommendations for the design of water fountain installations should be considered, as outlined in the FA Report Overlay.
- In conclusion, it must be said, however, that the **majority of the environmental impacts** of an international event, including the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin, were related to **transportation,** especially air travel. 90% of the impacts during the World Games were attributed to this factor.

Greener Games

PERCEPTION AND RESULTS OF THE WORLD GAMES

The Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 were and continue to be perceived as a huge success in terms of both media coverage and public perception. In the days and weeks following the event, there was a lot of praise and recognition from society, the sports community and politicians. This general impression will be examined in more detail in this chapter.

Throughout the planning process for the World Games, the athletes were at the center of attention, so their feedback and that of the other stakeholder groups will be considered first, before looking at the media response and the perception of the Berlin World Games.

06

#Unbeatable**Together**

6.1 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Special Olympics International conducted an extensive client satisfaction survey following the World Games to gather feedback on the satisfaction of participants, staff and visitors. The following statements and ratings are based on the responses of 570 athletes and Unified Partners, as well as 4,746 individuals who participated in or attended the World Games in other capacities.

Athlete & Unified Partner feedback

The **overall satisfaction and perception** of the athletes and Unified Partners surveyed at the SOWG 2023 was very positive. 93% of the athletes and Unified Partners surveyed said they were happy about their experience at the World Games. In addition, 83% of the respondents stated that their self-confidence had increased as a result of their participation in the World Games

The **sports conditions** at the World Games were consistently rated positively. Of particular note were the positive ratings for the additional training day, the quality of the sports venues / playing fields (Field of Play), the supportive crowd, and the music and announcers. These statements are further supported by the fact that 78% of respondents reported achieving a new personal best in Berlin.

Overall, the competition schedule and the quality of the changing rooms were rated positively, but with room for improvement. In addition, 18% of respondents felt that athletes were not competing at the same sports level in the competitions and criticized the divisioning process. The performance of the sports officials was perceived as fair by 82% of respondents.
With regard to the services provided in connection with the competitions, the **accommodations** scored particularly well (61% "very good" and only 4% "not good"). **Volunteer** service was rated as very good by 81% of respondents. As expected, feedback on the catering during the World Games was mixed. Only 49% of the participants rated the **catering** as "very good," 36% said the food and drinks were "okay" and 15% of the respondents found the catering "not good." Additional comments suggest that especially the traditional German cold dinner (Brotzeit) at the Exhibition Center (Messe) was not to the taste of the delegations.

The **games app** also received mixed feedback. A detailed analysis of the statements shows that the presentation of the results and the start lists were criticized, while the overall design of the app received much praise and approval.

The **supporting program** was also well received, with the Opening Ceremony, Host Town program and Awards Ceremonies attracting particular praise.

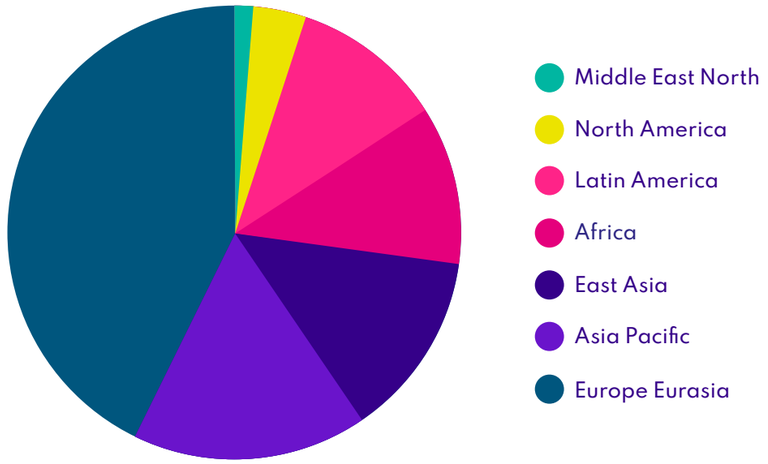
The **Healthy Athletes© program** was found to be helpful by over 82% of the respondents, and 81% would recommend the Healthy Athletes program to friends and other athletes. A particularly impressive aspect of the organization of the Healthy Athletes program is the fact that 79% of the respondents said they did not have to wait when accessing the Healthy Athletes program.

Some of the **most memorable moments** recalled by participants include the unforgettable Opening Ceremony, the proud moment of receiving their medals, and the valuable friendships made during the World Games.

Athletes (player with ID)

Unified Partner (player without ID)

Group affiliation and number of respondents



What was your most memorable moment at these Games?

Feedback from all other participants and visitors

Overall, the World Games were perceived as a high-quality experience by an overwhelming majority (93%) of the participants. In addition, participating in or attending the Games led to a better understanding of Special Olympics for 95% of the respondents. 88% said the Games changed their perception of the abilities of people with intellectual and multiple disabilities.

Encouragingly, 95% of the respondents expressed a high level of willingness to participate in future Special Olympics events. These results suggest that the World Games were well received by a variety of groups and helped to raise awareness of Special Olympics and people with intellectual and multiple disabilities.

The sports facilities were rated “satisfactory” to “very satisfactory” by 94% of the respondents. Both watching the sports competitions and interacting with the athletes were positively perceived. The provision of information about the sports and the quality of the awards ceremonies also received mostly positive feedback.

The most critical issues mentioned in regards to the sports facilities were the following three aspects

1. signage and navigation (2.3% of respondents)
2. accessibility (1.7% of respondents)
3. information about the facility (1.6% of respondents)

Overall, participant satisfaction with the various events in the accompanying program was very high. Of particular note was the Opening Ceremony at the Olympic Stadium, which received the highest satisfaction rating from respondents. In contrast, the Closing Ceremony received the highest percentage of dissatisfaction (16%), although it was still rated positively by over 80% of the respondents, resulting in a very good rating overall.

Satisfaction overall with the various services surveyed, including registration, transportation, accommodations and food, was very high to high. The vast majority of the respondents (over 90% on average) found the services satisfactory.

However, it is worth noting that almost a quarter of the respondents were not satisfied with the international media coverage. Similarly, about one-fifth of the respondents found the visibility of people with disabilities in media coverage to be unsatisfactory. Although the wording of the question in the study does not allow for a direct conclusion, it can be assumed that this relative dissatisfaction is not isolated to the media coverage of the World Games, but rather compared to the level of coverage of other major international sports events. The national media coverage of the media alliance was consistently rated positively.

The respondents stated that the athletes, the joy and the Opening Ceremony stood out as some of the most memorable moments.

Group affiliation and number of respondents

1.753	Volunteers (inc. DAL, Key Volunteers)
747	Family Program Member
607	Coaches
371	Honored Guests
312	Spectator
232	Technical Sport Officials
182	Head of Delegations / Assistants
167	Healthy Athletes® Volunteers
102	Other
97	Other Delegation Staff
71	Global Athlete Congress Participants
48	Media
34	Fans-in-the-Stands Participants
16	Sponsors
7	Torch Run Participants

6.2 MEDIA COVERAGE

From the very beginning, the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 faced a major challenge: The majority of people in Germany were not familiar with Special Olympics or confused it with the Paralympics. This phenomenon was evident not only among recipients of various types of media, but also among media professionals.

As a result, the FA Communications was tasked with several responsibilities

- Explain the Special Olympics to media professionals and the importance of the event both to German society as a whole and in comparison to major sports events in general;
- Encourage media professionals and media companies to cover the event;
- Introduce the population of Berlin and Brandenburg to Special Olympics and the Special Olympics World Games, and stimulate curiosity and motivate people to visit the World Games;
- Provide comprehensive information about the World Games and its protagonists to visitors, media representatives, volunteers and staff during the World Games;
- Lay the foundation for media coverage of Special Olympics in the post-World Games period.

A particular challenge for the LOC Media division was that the Games Agreement required them to assume the role of Host Broadcaster. This gave the LOC the responsibility to produce and distribute the live and recorded broadcast signal to television networks worldwide in partnership with ESPN, the television partner of Special Olympics International.

However, the LOC was initially only granted the TV rights for Germany, which were later extended, after intensive discussions by the FA Media & Broadcasting, to the DACH region (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) for German TV stations that can also be received or broadcast in Austria and Switzerland. The international rights, including marketing rights, were held by ESPN.

The full scope of this unique role as host broadcaster was only realized by the LOC during the preparations. The creation of the national media alliance and the implementation of the FA Media & Broadcasting under a dedicated director after the National Games addressed the need to have comprehensive support for national TV partners and service providers.

Due to the limited budget, these tasks had to be carried out with an extremely small team, with the involvement of external specialists at a very late stage, and with the invaluable support of SKY as a member of the media alliance in regards to personnel and technology, which went beyond the contractually agreed volume.

Measures

From the beginning, the focus in the area of public relations was on the period from March 2023 onwards, as this was the only time when increased media interest could be expected due to the aforementioned conditions. The period prior to this was used to raise awareness among media professionals, create media-relevant events and establish the LOC's own editorial teams to create media content. The LOC acted as its own "content factory" in the areas of print, photography and motion picture. Content was produced and distributed according to the type of media.

The LOC used a pool of 8 photographers on a rotating basis and worked with sid Media after a public tender to produce and distribute motion picture of events and self-determined themes. Press releases and news were disseminated through a self-created and maintained distribution system with tailored distribution. It should be noted that efforts were made to translate relevant press releases, texts, etc. into Easy Language and – during the Games – English. In addition, an Inclusive editorial team was set up prior to the World Games, which significantly enriched content production with 30 individuals and supervisors. This included co-commentators and experts, moderators, editorial texts such as reports, articles or interviews ...

All planned topics were discussed in weekly editorial meetings with colleagues from the website and social media departments, where the editorial schedule was set and adjusted. This editorial schedule was set up at an early stage based on milestone dates.

The strategy of first raising awareness and then producing and distributing our own content proved to be viable and successful. Articles from the LOC editorial team appeared in numerous print publications, including agencies. Video segments were broadcast on television as well as on websites and video platforms. In many cases, they served as a catalyst for self-reporting in print, web and TV.

All content produced and owned by the LOC was made available to the media free of charge through various archives and platforms. In the area of photography, this was done through Picdrop and the cooperation platform with Getty, which also allowed for international distribution. Print articles were distributed through the LOC mailing list and made available for download on the website. TV content was available to all interested media professionals, regardless of medium, after registration via the scoopa platform – and was used extensively not only by members of the media alliance.

In the area of motion picture, the LOC as host broadcaster produced more than 300 hours of live material, with up to ten sports being broadcast simultaneously as live feeds every day, a curated mixed live feed, highlight clips in three different lengths and editorial coverage. The Opening Ceremony at the Olympic Stadium was televised live with 20 cameras, while the Closing Ceremony was televised with 10.

The media alliance

The obligation to act as the host broadcaster presented the LOC with unique challenges, both in terms of content and personnel. Initial thoughts that Germany's two public broadcasters, ARD and ZDF, could take on this role proved unfeasible.

Instead, the envisioned idea was to bring together the largest TV broadcasters in Germany to form the most unique TV alliance in the history of German television. The goal of this alliance was to work together to increase the awareness and visibility of people with intellectual disabilities. Such an alliance had never existed before in the history of German television.

Eleven companies joined this alliance for the World Games: ARD, ZDF, RTL, Pro7Sat1, SKY, Deutsche Telekom, Amazon, Meta, dazn, Sport1, and BILD. All of them, to varying degrees, contributed to the costs incurred by the LOC in fulfilling its duties as host broadcaster. In addition, their staff advised and supported the LOC, while they provided extensive coverage of the World Games in a variety of broadcast formats. This ranged from live coverage from their own studios, background reports in sports formats and news segments in news formats, to contributions in broadcasting formats that deal with societal issues or entertainment formats. Special Olympics was present in all areas of the television landscape.

Thanks to the support of the media alliance and through refinancing elements such as the rate card for TV channels, the rental of capacities, facilities, etc. at the competition venues or at the International Broadcast Center (located at the Exhibition Center (Messe) Berlin), the LOC managed to make the role as host broadcaster almost cost neutral.

Summary

The Berlin 2023 World Games achieved a record number of Special Olympics media accreditations: 1,800 media professionals applied for accreditation in Berlin. This included employees working for the LOC in the Media department (writers, including the editorial team, photographers, TV directors, camera operators, technicians, editors – nearly 600 in total), as well as over 1,000 media professionals in the areas of print, social media, web, photography and TV. It is noteworthy that the media alliance's coverage starting in April and their support by providing airtime for clips produced by the LOC (on topics such as volunteering, ticket sales, Special Olympics in general, TV broadcast trailers, etc.) not only helped to significantly increase awareness of the World Games, but also encouraged more media to participate in the coverage. This resulted in a high volume of post-accreditation requests that stretched the LOC's media operations team to the limit.

Cumulatively, the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 reached more than 4 billion contacts worldwide. Nearly 1,200 broadcasts covered the World Games in motion picture, resulting in 370 hours of airtime. In 52 documented German print media, 570 articles were published, in addition to hundreds of unrecorded articles in local editions of various publishing units, advertising publications, trade journals, etc. More than 3,000 articles were published on nearly 70 websites. The goal of raising awareness of Special Olympics and the World Games, and thereby increasing the visibility of people with intellectual disabilities, was achieved 100%.

6.3 MEDIA COVERAGE DURING THE WORLD GAMES

The Special Olympics generated a total of €10.9B in advertising media exposure. Print and online coverage was measured in Germany only, while TV coverage was measured within 8 markets. On TV, the highest advertising media exposure was generated in Germany (77%).

On German TV, advertising media exposure was mainly driven by the large media alliance of public and private broadcasters. The leading broadcasters in Germany were ARD, ZDF and RBB. Outside of Germany, the US Broadcaster ABC had the highest coverage.

	TV	STREAMING	ONLINE	PRINT	TOTAL	SOCIAL MEDIA
Cumulative Reach* (in MM)	188,470	4,142	3.445,228	185,900	**3.823,740**	490,770
Number of Programs / Videos / Articles / Posts	1.190	161	3.222	570	**5.143**	70.683
Total broadcast hours (hh:mm:ss)	369:01:08	222:05:21	-	-	**591:06:29**	-
Advertising Media exposure BT (in MM)	1.759,53	65,21	8.732,60	309,78	**10.867,12**	-
Visibility (hh:mm:ss)	288:22:49	255:31:57	-	-	**543:54:46**	-
Mentions/Post (#)	-	-	9.467	1.290	**10.757**	808
100%-Media Value (€)	13.629.785	1.430.290	12.684.819	2.907.920	**31.296.083**	704.477
QI-Media Value (€)	3.740.186	581.963	3.764.237	594.750	**8.681.137**	370.957

*Source National: AGF in cooperation with GfK/TV Scope/D+EU/BRD gesamt/01.01.2023-28.06.2023/Reichweite 3+/August 2023/Nielsen Sports

6.4 AWARENESS IN BERLIN

One of the main goals of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 was to raise awareness of Special Olympics among Berliners and visitors to the city. The goal was to encourage them to attend the competitions and to think about the challenges faced by people with intellectual and multiple disabilities.

To achieve this goal, various communication measures were implemented in addition to intensive PR efforts

Out-of-Home venues

- Development of powerful advertising motifs in accordance with the LOC's corporate design guidelines
- Extensive billboard campaigns inside and outside of Berlin in several waves
- Cooperation with out-of-home marketers for spaces in Berlin and other German cities (provision of billboard spaces)

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REWE

TOYOTA

UNTERSTÜTZT DURCH

Wall

Partnerships with BVG and S-Bahn Berlin (DB)

- Wrapping of S-Bahn, TRAM and BVG bus vehicles with World Games branding (over several months during normal operations of these companies)

Large-scale media partnerships

including ones with Tagesspiegel, Funke Mediengruppe (Morgenpost), Burda Medien, Prisma

- Providing advertising space, events and editorial content
- Radio partnerships

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City dressing:

- Flagging the official route in Berlin
- Visibility in front of public buildings, the main train station, transportation hubs, etc.

Event marketing:

- Intensive deployment of event marketing teams at various events in Berlin, such as:
  - the BMW Berlin Marathon
  - home games of Bundesliga teams in various sports
  - neighborhood festivals
  - family sports festivals
  - etc.

The measures adopted made it possible to significantly increase awareness of Special Olympics in general and the World Games in particular prior to the event. It should be noted, however, that the pre-event awareness in Berlin did not reach the level of other major sports events that have a higher baseline awareness in the Berlin population compared to the Special Olympics World Games. Examples include the DFB Cup Final, the UEFA Champions League Final in 2015, and the BMW Berlin Marathon.

For a more detailed analysis of the impact of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 on the host city of Berlin, please refer to the Berlin Senate's publications on the city's return on investment. These were not available at the time this final report was completed.

THE FUTURE

07

7.1 POLITICAL RECOGNITION

One of the key success factors for the implementation of the event was the significant (societal and) political support. There was political recognition that the Games could make a valuable contribution to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) from the local to the international level. The SOG and LOC therefore developed various measures and actively engaged different levels of government to achieve a variety of impacts. Awareness has been raised about the living conditions of people with disabilities and the changes that need to be made, with a focus on:

- promoting the self-advocacy and self-determination of athletes
- creating access to sports
- creating access to inclusive education
- promoting inclusive youth engagement
- strengthening international cooperation

As the German federal government invited government representatives of the participating countries through the highest diplomatic channels, policymakers from over 70 nations were welcomed. By involving international institutions such as the UN, WHO, UNICEF and the EU, a global exchange was initiated, in part through the Global Forum, which resulted in concrete results with the Berlin Declaration and the establishment of the International Coalition for Inclusion. On this basis, efforts are now being made in many countries to improve the living conditions of people with intellectual disabilities.

In Germany, the focus was on promoting local participation. During the application phase, the SOG successfully established a broad network and involved key political actors. For example, the Conference of State Ministers of Sport (SMK) passed comprehensive resolutions to promote the sustainable impact of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 and now supports the creation of sustainable structures in state associations to provide more access to sports. The SMK also encouraged other state conferences to address the issue of inclusion through sport. The Conference of the State Commissioners for Disabled Persons endorsed the SMK's decision and published its own position paper on the promotion of sports, which is also a result of the World Games 2023. In cooperation with the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, nationwide school projects and teacher training programs have been developed and implemented. This cooperation will be intensified from 2024 onwards. The three municipal umbrella organizations (German Association of Cities, German Association of Counties and German Association of Towns and Municipalities) worked on the Host Town program and its impact at the local level. Local political bodies provided funding for the implementation of the Host Town program and approved measures to promote inclusion. Congresses, webinars and network meetings facilitated exchanges between municipalities. In addition, the German federal government supported model projects in municipalities to increase participation and actively involve people with intellectual disabilities as participation advisors. Another national congress will follow in 2024 to consolidate the network and formulate common goals for the coming years.

The German Bundestag supported the bid for and hosting of the World Games across party lines and approved financial support. The Sports Committee of the German Bundestag received regular updates and reports on the progress and sustainable impact of the Games. Parliamentary debates on Special Olympics and the changes needed to promote inclusion were also held for the first time, further raising political awareness. As a result of these developments, the SOG received a significant increase in sports funding to improve the structural conditions for TeamSOG and the support of athletes. In order to leverage the Games' cross-sectoral impact and understand inclusion as a cross-cutting issue, the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) convened regular inter-ministerial meetings with various ministries. The ministries were actively involved and cross-cutting measures were developed for the National Action Plan for the implementation of the UN CRPD.

The Games provide an extraordinary opportunity to create a social policy impact and raise awareness of the need for change in the implementation of the UN CRPD. A holistic approach from the local to the international level needs to be developed, and the involvement of various policymakers from the outset is crucial. This is not just a "nice to have," as the Games can be used as a catalyst for necessary processes and structural changes. Political support is essential for these needs.

7.2 INCLUSIVE HOST TOWNS

The organization of the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 was a unique opportunity for the SOG to raise the public's and politicians' awareness of the needs of people with intellectual disabilities and to initiate a societal shift towards greater inclusion and participation.

From the beginning, the SOG's goal was not only to host a successful sports event, but also to have a lasting impact throughout Germany. The Host Town program aimed to create enthusiasm for inclusion where it was needed most: in the athletes' home communities. The visit of the delegations was as crucial as the ongoing efforts of the Host Town coordinators for the sustainable expansion of inclusive structures and services in their municipalities.

From January to October 2021, all German municipalities could apply to become a Host Town for the SOWG Berlin 2023. In addition to a letter of motivation and an initial program proposal, the application had to include a concept for an inclusive project that would be implemented locally over the long term.

Host Towns were advised and supported by the Special Olympics regional associations in the development and implementation of inclusive project ideas. To ensure the development of sustainable structures beyond the World Games, the LOC and the regional associations have worked closely together in the Host Town program since its inception. Without the efforts and work of the Special Olympics regional associations, sustainable cooperation with the Host Town municipalities would not have been possible. While the LOC managed the operational processes from Berlin, the Special Olympics regional associations actively supported the Host Towns in building inclusive networks and organizing inclusive events. In addition, the regional associations facilitated the networking of Host Towns within a state by organizing statewide networking meetings and exchange formats.

The partnership between the Special Olympics regional associations and the Host Towns should continue after the World Games. A survey conducted by the LOC regarding the Host Town program revealed that 94% of the Host Towns responding to the survey were interested in continuing their relationship with Special Olympics. In many federal states, there are already concrete plans to organize sports events, health services, competitions or training sessions in various municipalities. Some Host Towns have also expressed interest in hosting Special Olympics state games.

The umbrella campaign #Unbeatable**Together**

During the project period of the Host Town program, the #Unbeatable**Together** campaign was developed in partnership between the LOC and SOG. This campaign links the Host Town program with three SOG projects: "Local Inclusive Unified Engagement" (LIVE), "We Belong" (WGD) and "Increasing Movement and Health in Everyday Life" (BeuGe), forming the largest inclusion movement in Germany. Although these projects have different focuses, they share the common goal of building inclusive structures and networks at the municipal level. The LIVE project emphasizes the active participation and self-advocacy of people with intellectual disabilities and their training as participation advisors. WGD focuses on the inclusive opening of sports clubs, while the BeuGe project aims to create barrier-free and sustainable health promotion opportunities for people with disabilities in their immediate environment. Many of the Host Towns are also LIVE municipalities or involved in WGD and BeuGe projects. The umbrella campaign was developed to avoid the creation of parallel structures and to maximize the synergies between the projects for the benefit of the target group.

Project teams at the federal and state levels communicate regularly to coordinate and ensure a common direction. For example, four cross-project workshops were held to develop a common strategy for sustainable project alignment. In addition, working groups have been formed to address various priority issues, such as conducting inclusive events or establishing inclusive networks.

In addition, the project teams conducted a four-part digital sustainability series in September 2023, inviting representatives from municipalities, sports clubs and associations, project partners, and athletes. During these two-hour interactive sessions, participants discussed different priority issues. The first session focused on "Inclusive Civic Engagement", while the second session addressed "Sport as a Regional Inclusion Driver". The third and fourth sessions focused on "Health for All" and "Inclusive Education Projects". The aim of the sustainability series was to preserve the experiences, concepts and structures created at the municipal level through the World Games and the #Unbeatable**Together** projects

The results of the sustainability series, workshops and working groups will be incorporated into a common guide. This guide aims to consolidate the experiences and knowledge gained from the projects and serve as a support to other municipalities on their journey towards greater inclusion and participation.

The importance of state policy

In order to support Host Towns and expand inclusive structures, Special Olympics regional associations worked closely with their respective state governments. With financial support from state ministries, sixteen part-time and full-time positions were created in ten regional associations to implement the Host Town program. In many cases, the funding periods extend beyond the World Games. However, it is crucial for the long-term establishment of inclusive structures that these staff positions can be secured in the future. The regional associations are in regular contact with the state governments regarding the continuation of funding. Encouragingly, follow-up funding has already been confirmed in two federal states and promising discussions are underway in others. The experiences of the #Unbeatable**Together** projects have shown that full-time support is essential for the sustainability of inclusive structures.

7.3 MEDIA ALLIANCE

All members of the media alliance were very pleased with the results of Special Olympics, which met their own goals. The response from their audiences, including audience reactions, ratings and KPI measurements, was very satisfactory. In addition, all stakeholders in the political, social, business and sports communities were unanimous in their positive response to the social and societal statement made by the alliance's involvement.

Shortly after the Closing Ceremony of the World Games, all members of the alliance expressed their willingness to continue their efforts. Just a few weeks after the end of the World Games, initial discussions about the continuation of the alliance took place during the Special Olympics Germany National Winter Games in Thuringia (Oberhof/Erfurt/Weimar). As a result, it was possible in September 2023 to initiate plans for the production and technical support of the National Winter Games 2024 through the media alliance.

7.4 SUSTAINABLE IMPACT AND IDEAS FOR PARTICIPATION

The World Games have provided an important impetus for the creation of inclusive structures and acted as a catalyst for the visibility and recognition of athletes and people with intellectual disabilities in general. Beginning with the nationwide Host Town program and supported by the extensive media coverage of the media alliance, they generated a radiance that extended far beyond Berlin to the whole of Germany and the world. The World Games set new standards for the social sustainability of major sports events, which will serve as benchmarks for major events in the future.

This has laid an essential foundation for sustainable social and political change, genuine participation, the reduction of prejudice and full inclusion. The World Games have had a positive impact on urban and sports development, not only in the host city of Berlin, but also in more than 230 municipalities in all federal states. Overall, the World Games have made a significant contribution to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Germany and to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

During the bid phase, it was articulated that the World Games would be more than just a sports festival. Rather, they would make a significant contribution to the overarching goal of increasing the participation of people with intellectual disabilities in and through sport. Therefore, sustainable development and the legacy of the Games formed the basis for all planning and concepts. The participation and empowerment of athletes has always been at the forefront.

Against this backdrop, a catalog of sustainable (sports) policy goals and concrete projects/measures in the areas of sports, education, health, inclusive volunteering, youth engagement, science, accessibility and the promotion of international cooperation was initiated and implemented. The importance of this innovative approach was recognized by the awarding of the German Sustainability Prize for Sport in November 2023.

The successful hosting of the Games now offers excellent opportunities to achieve the long-term societal goals that will not end with the conclusion of the Games. In the aftermath of the World Games, it is therefore crucial to maintain the effort and to continue on the path set out together to secure the legacy of the World Games. Past successes must be anchored, maintained and further developed. This has also been repeatedly confirmed and advocated by the Conference of Sports Ministers and the Conference of Federal and State Representatives for People with Disabilities.
In detail, this means:

Living inclusion locally – widespread support for expanding participation opportunities
The Host Town program and the umbrella campaign #Unbeatable**Together** have created a network of 230 municipalities throughout Germany to promote and advocate for inclusion while enabling participation in and through sports. This network needs to be maintained and further developed. Local network structures need to be firmly established and given leeway to act as they see best. This requires continuity in coordination and exchange within and between municipalities. To date, more than half of all federal states have confirmed that they will continue to fund positions within the state structures of Special Olympics in this area in order to anchor the established municipal structures. This support and funding are necessary nationwide in order to utilize the potential of the established structures, to involve new and interested municipalities and to continue to create participation opportunities on a large scale.

Making access to (inclusive) sports the norm
The World Games made it clear: people with intellectual disabilities must have access to sports and should be able to decide where, with whom and in what form they want to participate. By 2026, the level of organization of people with intellectual disabilities in sports should increase from eight to sixteen percent. Sports clubs play a central role in this. Both #Unbeatable**Together** and the World Games in general have raised awareness among many clubs, and there are impressive examples of clubs that have opened up to inclusion. However, they still make up only a small proportion of the 91,000 sports clubs throughout Germany, and efforts should continue to gain sports clubs to promote inclusion.

To achieve this, it is necessary to create and provide structural and human resources. An important aspect is the standardized education and training of coaches for inclusive sports. In the medium term, efforts should be made to ensure that inclusion issues become an integral part of the general training of coaches in sports associations. Access to sports needs to be further and more strongly promoted in disability assistance organizations. Cooperation with clubs in the context of local networking activities can help to break down barriers and strengthen social participation. There are also examples from the Host Town program that underscore the potential of these partnerships.

Expanding inclusive volunteering
The World Games demonstrated that inclusive paid and volunteer work in sports is possible and feasible by involving people with intellectual disabilities in the planning and implementation of the World Games as members of the Organizing Committee and in all working groups, and also as volunteers in inclusive tandems. This made a significant contribution to self-determination and equal opportunities, and promoted exchange and dialog. These were Games by Athletes for Athletes. People with intellectual disabilities want to contribute and volunteer for society. People noticed the added value for society for the first time during the World Games. That is why structures need to be put in place.

It is very gratifying that inclusive tandems will also be used at UEFA Euro 24 – a good example of how the standards tested at the World Games can also set the framework for major sports events in the future and strengthen the credibility and acceptance of such events in one's own country.

The SOG is currently developing an engagement strategy to work with municipal structures, organized sports and civil society to expand inclusive volunteering in the long term and to recruit event volunteers for inclusive sport on a permanent basis. Again, the support and assistance of political partners is needed to strengthen and make volunteering more inclusive and accessible.

Building visibility and addressing real-life situations

The World Games have had a very positive impact on the social perception of people with intellectual disabilities and their achievements, resulting in unprecedented attention to inclusion issues. This public visibility must be maintained and expanded. Continued cooperation with the media alliance, greater involvement of public cultural institutions such as sports museums, and continued partnerships with academic institutions are necessary aspects of sustainability.

At the same time, this visibility must also be evident in the political decision-making process. For example, the real-life situations of people with intellectual disabilities must be taken into account in the development of sports funding laws and the sports development plan. “Nothing about us without us” is the maxim of participation planning, and this principle must also be applied here.

Partnerships and policy frameworks

The World Games made it clear: the potential for change exists. With a shared commitment to sustainable impact and a clear political and societal commitment, the World Games can use their influence to make (sports) policy goals a reality and create lasting societal change.

Special Olympics Germany (SOG), together with the 16 regional associations, will continue to take responsibility for the increased participation and self-determination of people with intellectual disabilities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to our many partners and supporters, whose valuable contributions have made it possible for the World Games to become an impressive symbol of inclusion and international understanding.

The German Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Berlin Senate Department for the Interior and Sport, representing the sports metropolis of Berlin, were not only the main financial supporters of the event, but also strong partners the entire time and gave us their enthusiastic support. We also thank the European Union for its contribution to the event. Other strong partners included Aktion Mensch and Deutsche Stiftung für Engagement und Ehrenamt. In our host city of Berlin, we also received significant support from the public administration. We would like to thank the relevant Senate departments and the district offices. VisitBerlin, the team at Berlin Brandenburg Airport, and Berlin's public transportation companies made a great contribution to the many positive experiences of visitors and guests in Berlin. We would also like to thank the teams at the venues who supported us the entire time. The State Sports Association of Berlin and the Berlin cultural scene contributed significantly to the diversity and vibrancy of the World Games, while the Berlin Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK Berlin) and the Berlin Merchants and Industrialists Association (VBKI) activated their networks and inspired enthusiasm for the World Games. Johanniter Unfallhilfe played a leading role in ensuring the safety of the event – thank you!

Thank you also to the people of Berlin, who made the city a wonderful host: open-minded, tolerant, curious, enthusiastic and inspiring at the same time.

Many thanks to the more than 200 municipalities which, through their commitment as Host Towns, their ideas and their financial support, ensured that the World Games became an inclusive celebration throughout Germany.

Without the financial and material support, as well as the personal commitment and expertise of the many partners and companies, the event would not have been possible in this form – a big thank you for that. In particular, we would like to thank our premium partners Coca-Cola, REWE, Deutsche Telekom and Toyota.

We thank all members of the media alliance for their commitment to this unique project and for making the media success of the World Games possible.

Without the commitment of the 18,000 volunteers, the World Games in Berlin would not have been possible:

Thank you all!

Last but not least, we would like to express our gratitude to the many people at Special Olympics International, Special Olympics Germany, the World Games Committee and our Local Organizing Committee team. The great success of the World Games is also your success.

Together we were unbeatable.

Thanks

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GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATION LIST

BeuGe
„Bewegung und Gesundheit im Alltag stärken“ (a project by Special Olympics Germany)

Cluster
Collection of multiple venues close together (e.g., Sport Cluster or Hotel Cluster)

DAL
Delegation Assistant Liaison (permanent liaison for a delegation during the World Games; Volunteer)

FA
Functional Area – Function-related organizational unit within the Local Organizing Committee

FCC
Functional Command Center – Leadership level of a team / Functional area during the implementation phase of the Games

FITS
Fans in the Stands (Visitor program for institutional groups)

Games Agreement
Agreement between the SOI and the LOC for the implementation of the World Games

Games Time
Time period for the World Games

Healthy Athletes®
Health program at the Special Olympics

HOD
Head of Delegation

HR
Human Ressources

Key Volunteer
Volunteer with responsible / coordinating function

KPI
Key Performance Indicator

LETR®
Law Enforcement Torch Run / Torch relay for the World Games – Organized by an international team of members from executive authorities (primarily police officers)

LIVE
„Lokal Inklusiv Verein(tes) Engagement“ (a project by Special Olympics Germany)

LOC
Local Organizing Committee (Special Olympics Berlin 2023 Organizing Committee gGmbH)

MOC
Main Operations Center (Organization and deployment center)

Non-Sport Events
Accompanying program not related to sports

ÖPNV
Local public transportation

Onboarding
Training

Readiness Exercise
Test run / Exercise

Results Requirements Books
Books with result requirements

SOG
Special Olympics Germany (Deutschland)

SOEE
Special Olympics Europe Eurasia

SOLV
Special Olympics Regional Associations

SOI
Special Olympics International

SONG 2022
Special Olympics National Games Berlin 2022

SOWG 2023
Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023

Tabletop exercise
Theoretical test of a simulated incident

Technical Manuals
Technical manuals for the implementation of the World Games.

Unified Generation
Young people with different talents and abilities growing up together without barriers.

Unified Sports / Unified Partner
Unified Sports means that athletes with and without disabilities participate in sports and competitions together; Unified Partner refers to the person without a disability.

Volunteer
Voluntary helper

WGD
„Wir gehören dazu“ (a project by Special Olympics Germany)

SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD GAMES BERLIN 2023

GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATION LIST

OVERVIEW OF ALL HOST TOWNS

Assignment of delegations and Host Towns

HOST TOWN	DELEGATION
BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG	
Freiburg im Breisgau	SO Algeria
Pforzheim	SO Vietnam
Rottenburg am Neckar	SO Belize
Wilhelmsdorf	SO Faroe Islands
Karlsruhe	SO Switzerland
Tübingen	SO Botswana
Klettgau	SO Liechtenstein
Enzkreis	SO Bangladesh
Schwetzingen/Wiesloch	SO Jamaica
Mannheim	SO Moldova
Baden-Baden	SO Guatemala
Rems-Murr-Kreis mit den Städten Winnenden, Backnang und Waiblingen	SO Bermuda
Ladenburg/Ilvesheim	SO Dominica
Heilbronn/Neckarsulm	SO Chile
Stuttgart	SO Great Britain
Mosbach/Schwarzach	SO Mongolia
Künzelsau	SO Iran
BAVARIA	
Weilheim-Schongau	SO Cuba
Olching	SO Saint Kitts-Nevis
Landsberg am Lech	SO Bolivia
Garching/Ismaning	SO New Zealand
Oettingen in Bayern	SO Cambodia
Bayreuth	SO Romania
Garmisch-Partenkirchen	SO Thailand
München	SO Canada
Kempten (Allgäu)	SO Iceland
Ingolstadt	SO San Marino
Erlangen	SO Serbia
Planegg/Gräfelfing	SO Papua New Guinea
Aschaffenburg/Alzenau	SO Paraguay
Ebersberg	SO France
Kaufbeuren	SO Aruba
Augsburg	SO Mali
Coburg	SO Togo
Freising	SO Kenya
Ansbach	SO Laos
Bamberg	SO Bahrain
Fürth	SO Venezuela
Neuendettelsau	SO Saint Maarten
Regensburg/Kelheim	SO Czech Republic
Nürnberg	SO Austria
Weiden in der Oberpfalz/ Neustadt a.d. Waldnaab	SO Hungary
Straubing	SO El Salvador

HOST TOWN	DELEGATION
Oberhaching/Taufkirchen	SO Gibraltar
Rosenheim	SO Mauritius
Günzburg	SO Burkina Faso
BERLIN	
Berlin Lichtenberg	SO Fiji
Berlin Marzahn-Hellersdorf	SO Marshall Islands
Berlin Spandau	SO Nauru
Berlin Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf	SO Chinese Taipei
Berlin Mitte	SO Pakistan
Berlin Neukölln	SO Kuwait
Berlin Treptow-Köpenick	SO Ukraine
BRANDENBURG	
Kleinmachnow/Teltow	SO Samoa
Bernau bei Berlin/Panketal	SO Malawi
Potsdam	SO Australia
Rüdersdorf bei Berlin	SO Mozambique
Rathenow	SO Timor Leste
Eberswalde	SO Saint Vincent & Grenadines
Brandenburg an der Havel	SO Malaysia
Fürstenwalde/Spree	SO Bhutan & SO Lesotho
BREMEN	
Bremen/Bremerhaven	SO United States of America
HAMBURG	
Hamburg	SO Guadeloupe

HOST TOWN	DELEGATION
HESSE	
Vogelsbergkreis	SO Curacao
Pfungstadt	SO Namibia
Wetzlar	SO Costa Rica
Hanau	SO Macau
Wiesbaden	SO Indonesia
Hersfeld-Rotenburg	SO Kyrgyz Republic
Werra-Meißner-Kreis	SO Kazakhstan
Neu-Isenburg	SO Guyana
Marburg	SO United Arab Emirates
Einhardstadt Seligenstadt	SO Trinidad and Tobago
Kassel	SO Slovenia
Frankfurt am Main	SO Bharat
Darmstadt	SO Nicaragua
Fulda	SO Argentina
Gießen	SO Cote d`Ivore
MECKLENBURG-WESTERN POMERANIA	
Barth	SO Croatia
Stralsund	SO Turkiye
Neubrandenburg	SO Peru
Rostock	SO Dominican Republic
LOWER SAXONY	
Göttingen	SO South Africa
Oldenburg/Hatten	SO North Macedonia

HOST TOWN	DELEGATION
Osnabrück	SO Turkmenistan
Verden (Aller)	SO Armenia
Gifhorn	SO Uzbekistan
Walsrode	SO Montenegro
Braunschweig	SO Morocco
Hameln	SO Slovakia
Hannover	SO Italy
Papenburg	SO Bahamas
Buchholz in der Nordheide	SO Georgia
Rotenburg (Wümme)/Sottrum	SO Portugal
Langenhagen	SO Poland
Meppen	SO Saint Lucia
Wolfsburg	SO Tunisia
Börde/Haldensleben	SO Singapore
NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA	
Düsseldorf	SO Korea
Bornheim	SO Guinea
Meschede	SO Burundi
Aachen	SO Bosnia and Herzegovina
Dinslaken	SO Maldives
Bielefeld	SO Ireland
Herne	SO Iraq
Duisburg	SO Saudi Arabia
Lüdenscheid	SO Mexico

HOST TOWN	DELEGATION
Münster	SO Netherlands
Nordwalde/Steinfurt	SO Colombia
Köln	SO Belgium
Hamm	SO Denmark
Dormagen	SO Guinea-Bissau
Kalletal/Lemgo	SO Luxembourg
Warendorf	SO Isle of Man
Bonn	SO China
Mönchengladbach	SO Nippon
Velbert	SO Jordan
Verl	SO Honduras
Oberhausen	SO Oman
Neuss/Rhein-Kreis Neuss	SO Senegal
Jülich	SO Lebanon
Bochum	SO Finland
Gütersloh	SO Estonia
Gelsenkirchen	SO Seychelles
Siegburg/Lohmar	SO Brazil
Paderborn/Bad Lippspringe/Bad Wünnenberg	SO Uruguay
Winterberg	SO Hong Kong
Dortmund	SO Palestine
Gangelt	SO Spain
Krefeld	SO Cayman Islands
Essen	SO Egypt

HOST TOWN	DELEGATION
Ratingen	SO Ethiopia
Olsberg	SO Andorra
Heiligenhaus	SO Mauritania
Troisdorf/Hennef	SO Uganda 2
RHINELAND-PALATINATE	
Neuwied	SO Palau
Bad Dürkheim	SO Pilipinas
Bitburg/Bitburger Land/Prüm	SO Azerbaijan
Ludwigshafen am Rhein	SO Eswatini
Trier	SO Panama
Mendig	SO South Sudan
Koblenz/Mayen-Koblenz	SO Ecuador
Speyer	SO Rwanda
Pirmasens	SO Uganda 1
SAARLAND	
Saarbrücken	SO Benin
Sankt Wendel	SO Zimbabwe
Spiesen-Elversberg	SO Hellas
Perl	SO Haiti
SAXONY	
Chemnitz	SO Lithuania
Leipzig	SO Libya
Auerbach/Vogtland	SO Cyprus
Wurzen	SO Gambia

HOST TOWN	DELEGATION
Dresden	SO Puerto Rico
SAXONY-ANHALT	
Arendsee (Altmark)	SO Syria
Sangerhausen/Mansfeld-Südharz	SO Albania
Burgenlandkreis	SO Bonaire
Halle (Saale)	SO Suriname
Quedlinburg	SO Tanzania
Thale	SO Ghana
Halberstadt	SO Cameroon & SO Madagascar
SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN	
Schleswig	SO Qatar
Kiel	SO Bulgaria
Lübeck	SO Sweden
Norderstedt	SO Norway
Stormarn	SO Tajikistan
THURINGIA	
Altenburg/Rositz	SO Kosovo
Gera	SO Malta
Jena	SO Latvia
Erfurt	SO Monaco

Delegations that had to cancel their participation in the Host Town program

HOST TOWN	DELEGATION
BAVARIA	
Hof	SO Cape Verde
HESSE	
Langen	SO Antigua and Barbuda
Idstein/Hünstetten/Waldems und Niedernhausen	SO Yemen
Kelkheim (Taunus)	SO Zambia
Baunatal	SO Djibouti
LOWER SAXONY	
Celle/Nienhagen	SO Nigeria
Hildesheim	SO Liberia
Lingen	SO Barbados
NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA	
Langenfeld/Monheim am Rhein	SO Serendib
Brühl	SO DRC
SAARLAND	
Spiesen-Elversberg	SO Congo
THURINGIA	
Weimar	SO Equatorial Guinea
Bad Blankenburg/Rudolstadt/Saalfeld	SO Sudan
Gotha	SO Somalia

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