



INWA Nordic Walking World Championships 2.9.2022 in Szklarska Poręba, Poland

Speech of Aki Karihtala, the President of the International Nordic Walking Federation:

Dear Nordic Walkers and the participants of the INWA Nordic Walking World Championships,

This is the moment that we have been waiting for a long time. Your Nordic Walking World Championships stage is now ready and set. Are you now all ready for the challenge?

During this weekend here in Szklarska Poręba you will be competing with each other but at the same time, we should have fun, make new friends and enjoy the international atmosphere.

That is what Nordic Walking is all about. Nordic Walking offers everything. These magical Nordic Walking poles do not only improve your physical and mental health but they unite and connect people from all over the world regardless of age, gender, or culture and that is maybe one of the greatest things about this wonderful sport. Nordic Walkers also share similar values what comes to respect for nature where Nordic Walkers spend most of their time with their poles.

International Nordic Walking Federation INWA was founded in Finland in the year 2000 and this is now our 22nd year of Nordic Walking promotion internationally. Since its establishment, we have been strongly focusing on the development of the educational Nordic Walking programs and instructor networks. We also collaborate with the scientific and medical communities to promote Nordic Walking. One challenge of Nordic Walking has earlier been: the image of Nordic Walking as a sport for elderly people. Naturally, there is nothing wrong with that but also, we want Nordic Walking to be a sport for all ages. This is one of the reasons why we developed our competition program. The first INWA World Cup was held in 2017 in Qinghai, China, and since that, World Cup events have been arranged yearly except during the Covid pandemic. But now is the time for the World Championships. I would like to thank the leaders and the organisation of the Polish Nordic Walking Association PZNW (Polskie Zrzeszenie Nordic Walking) for the great efforts and work that they have done to make this happen.

We have here now over 700 participants from at least 15 countries, which is a great achievement considering that this is our first INWA World Championships. I know that it has taken a lot of effort for all of you to prepare yourself for this great event not to mention the fact that many of you have also travelled a long distance to be here. I am very sure that this will have a positive impact also on the future development of Nordic Walking. Who knows, maybe Nordic Walking will someday be qualified as an Olympic Sport, you never know.

Thank you all for being here and I am honored to be here with you.

I declare the 2022 INWA Nordic Walking World Championships to be open.

INWA Mistrzostwa Świata Nordic Walking 2022 uważam za otwarte.

Aki Karihtala



President of INWA