



Special Olympics
Belgium



Media Alert

Special Champions League European Tournament: Victory of Portugal, Poland, Germany and Denmark

240 Special Olympics athletes from 12 countries gathered in Ghent

Ghent, 6 October 2024 – The Belgian edition of the Special Champions League European Tournament concluded with the victory of SL Benfica (Poule A), SO Poland (Poule B), Bayer 04 Leverkusen (Poule C) and SO Denmark (Poule D). After 20 pool matches, that the four big winners imposed themselves today on the field of Blaarmeersen in Ghent. In addition to sports, a health program allowed 200 athletes with intellectual disabilities to assess their knowledge of the link between nutrition and sports.

In autumnal weather, the first Belgian edition of the Special Champions League Tournament took place in Ghent, gathering 240 athletes with intellectual disabilities and around thirty coaches from 12 European countries. *"We were able to count on the organizational expertise of the Special Olympics Belgium team, who offered a unique moment to all athletes, thus putting social inclusion on the map of Belgian and European sports,"* explained Sander Bergland Henriksen from the European Football for Development Network, the organization co-hosting this event.

The Special Olympics athletes also participated in the 'Healthy Athlete Program,' where they received advice on their general health and nutrition. Through meetings with healthcare professionals, 200 athletes evaluated their knowledge and received tips for balanced nutrition in relation to sports.

The weekend concluded with a medal ceremony in the presence of the Mayor of Ghent. Each team left with unforgettable memories of this unique event. *"We are proud to have hosted this new edition of the Special Champions League Tournament. We offered a unique moment to our athletes and the atmosphere was as always there, thanks to our partners whom we thank",* concluded Dominique Dehaene, Director of Special Olympics Belgium and organizer of the event.

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About Special Olympics Belgium

Since its creation in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics has been working globally to bring people with intellectual disabilities out of the shadows and into the light of their communities. With inclusive programs in over 190 countries and the participation of more than 6 million athletes with intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics has become the largest sports and health organization in the world for people with disabilities. The non-profit organization Special Olympics Belgium was founded in 1979 and gathers 20,000 athletes. Special Olympics Belgium is a nationally accredited program, part of the global movement, and recognized by the Belgian Olympic and Interfederal Committee. The Special Olympics Belgium National Games are the sporting highlight of the year for more than 3,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics Belgium athletes will represent their country at the next Special Olympics World Winter Games in Turin, Italy, in 2025.

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