

Finnish Climbing Association becomes an official national federation for Ski Mountaineering, Susanna Saapunki will compete in the world cup

Finnish Climbing Association – FCA has decided to become an official national federation for Ski Mountaineering (Skimo). International Ski Mountaineering Federation (ISMF) has approved FCAs membership application and confirmed that FCA will be the official national representative of Finland. FCA oversees international activities in Ski Mountaineering and related competition system in Finland.

“I’m thrilled by the fact that FCA became a national federation also for the Ski Mountaineering. It feels particularly good due to the fact that Ski Mountaineering has been an integral part of my own mountain sports repertoire.”, says Juho Risku, the President of the FCA.

Ski Mountaineering will be an Olympic sport in 2026 winter Olympic games in Cortina Italy. FCA will start program to expand popularity and to develop the sport in Finland. Already now Ski Mountaineering is a popular sport among the FCA members. Ski Mountaineering is well suited for the Finish ski resorts, fell hiking routes and free ride locations.

“The ISMF family is delighted that athletes from more countries are joining our events. As we move forward on the road to the Milano/Cortina Olympic Games, our commitment is to work with National federations to grow our sport, to build the community and engage with athletes and fans alike. We are consistently growing our presence on the Scandinavian countries, and we are sure that by hosting the last stage of our World Cup circuit in Norway this year will bring even more attention to skimo in the region. We are convinced that the Finish skimo community will enjoy this journey with us and will show great success in the coming years.”, Jordi Canals Fontan, the General Secretary of ISMF tells.

Susanna Saapunki will compete in the world cup of Ski Mountaineering during the 2023 season. Already now Susanna has used Ski Mountaineering as a part of the mountain running training 2–3 times a week. Both sports are technically very similar and accent with Ski Mountaineering skis require similar characteristics from the athlete. Susanna will participate during the winter 2023 world cup uphill competitions and central European national leagues. The goal is to gain experience of the different competition formats of Ski Mountaineering.

“Skimo has been part of my winter training in Italy. It is interesting and fits well to my strengths. I’m going to participate uphill competitions at the Alps. It superb that FCA is putting energy to the sport in Finland, among other things I can now have the competition licenses and insurances in check.”, tells Susanna Saapunki.

More information

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Background

Finnish Climbing Association – FCV is a national federation of climbing in Finland. FCA has been founded in 1995. In addition to general lobbying of the sport, FCA organizes competitions, national teams, oversees the development of safety practices in climbing and maintains climbing instructor education system. FCA is the national representative of all the climbing sports, which are organized internationally under three international organizations, i.e. IFSC (International Federation of Sports Climbing), UIAA (International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation) and ISMF (International Ski Mountaineering Federation). Lead, boulder and speed climbing are Olympic sports organized under IFSC. Ice climbing lead and speed are organized under UIAA and they are on the path to become Olympic sports. Individual and team races, sprint, relay and vertical are Olympic sports organized under ISMF. In addition to international federations, FCA is also a member of Olympic Committee of Finland. At the moment there are approximately 50 000 climbers in Finland.

Founded in 2007, **Ski Mountaineering Federation ISMF** is the global governing body for ski mountaineering competitions. Since 2016, the organization is officially recognized by the International Olympic Committee IOC. Its main goals are the promotion, regulation and development of the ski mountaineering sport worldwide. Based in Lausanne, Switzerland, the ISMF's membership consists of 44 national mountaineering or ski sports federations in Europe, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. The ISMF organizes ski mountaineering World Cups events and World Championships. For the first time, ski mountaineering has been a medal sport at the 2020 Youth Olympic Games in Lausanne, Switzerland, and has recently been included in the program of the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026.

Susanna Saapunki is a mountain runner, who came 6th in uphill race at 2020 world championships and 12th in up and down. In addition Susanna has been 5th in 2022 European Championships in both uphill and up and down. Susanna lives in Bormio Northern Italy and trains at the Alps in collaboration with the Italians. Susanna represents Rovaniemi Mountaineering Club in Finland, which is a member of FCA.

Ski Mountaineering or in short Skimo is an Olympic sport which as uphill and downhill parts in steep environment. While progress is being made mostly by skis on, there are also steeper climbing sections where skis are carried attached to the backpack. In addition to accents the equipment is well suited for downhill skiing on varied snow at high speeds. Skiing happens in free ride conditions outside of groomed slopes. Depending on the competition athlete may require also more technical equipment such as rope, harness, crampons or an ice axe. Competition formats vary from usually less than three hour long individual and team races, that typically have three uphill and downhill parts and cover less than 2000 vertical meters of height, to sprint, where best athletes cover the route in about three minutes, relay, where three or four person teams cover a 15-minute-long section at the time and vertical, where athletes compete in continuous ascent of maximum of 700 vertical meters of height.