

## OUR HISTORY

Our present starts from the beginning of the 80s. Back then in Italy, in order to define people with disabilities, biased terms such as “handicappato”, “minorato”, “impedito” (handicapped, retarded, impeded) were used. Moreover, a sort of parental responsibility was attached to the development of autistic spectrum disorders.

In 1983, Alberto Benchimol took part in the first congresses dedicated to sports and disabilities with a contribution on the opportunities offered by winter sports and particularly by Alpine and cross-country skiing. The following year, he became an Alpine skiing instructor, pursuing his passion for mountain sports. This experience brought him into contact with the **Alpine skiing programme for disabled people** developed by Hal O’Leary, founder of the NSCD (National Sports Center for the Disabled), at the Winter Park Resort in Colorado (USA): an innovative reality from which he was able draw inspiration for a similar project in Italy.

In the same year and as a result of the interest shown by **Istituto Ortopedico Rizzoli** (Rizzoli Orthopaedic Institute) in **Bologna** and the sensitivity and extraordinary inventiveness of Raffaele Malavasi, the first original aids were invented such as support bars, ski tip connectors and harnesses, enabling people with disabilities to ski. A pioneering period, rich in activity, which was to trigger increasing interest in sports for disabled people, leading to the creation of new experiences in Alpine skiing and **Nordic skiing** and strengthening those already existing in other sports.

### 1988-2006

Italy took part in the Paralympics Winter Games in Innsbruck, an event in which Alberto Benchimol guided the visually challenged athlete Bruno Oberhammer. Together they won the first Italian Gold Medals in Giant Slalom and downhill skiing. They both received the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic and recognition by CONI (the Italian National Olympic Committee) for “honouring and making great Italian sport”.

Alberto Benchimol later became leader of the National Team of Alpine skiing for the disabled and is the trainer of the Italian Paralympics Committee (now Federazione italiana sport invernali paralimpici - Italian Federation of Winter Paralympic Sports), in courses dedicated to Guides for visually challenged skiers and skiing instructors specialized in teaching the disabled in the Associations of Veneto, Trentino and Val d’Aosta.

During his many years of activity as skiing instructor, Benchimol has **encouraged large numbers of young people and adults with disabilities to take part in Alpine skiing and contributed to the training of many specialised technicians.**

### 2006

Following the Winter Paralympic Games in Turin, Alberto Benchimol proposed to Giuliano Rinaldi and his daughter Paola that he should create, together with other 40 founder members, a sports foundation in memory of Giuliano’s young daughter Silvia, who had passed away in a mountain accident. The [Fondazione per lo sport Silvia Rinaldi Onlus](#) was therefore created.

A foundation that Benchimol directed for 10 years until 2016, conceiving all its 124 projects and involving more than 3,000 participants, 200 volunteers and training 180 sports technicians, building an informal network of 35 third-sector entities, 36 public and private institutions as partners and 16 financial partners.

Among other things, he created and directed a project to promote sports as a means towards social integration and parent relief.

- This project received the 2010 “Amico della famiglia” Prime Minister’s award.
- The “Outdoor Regione 365” project was then conceived and drafted together with Massimo Gherardi as a natural follow-up to the Regional Pilot Project “Appennino accogliente”, conceived by Giancarlo Marostica with the goal of rendering summer and winter sports in the Apennine Mountains of Emilia more inclusive and thus creating top-quality locations.
- The “A vista” project, created to enable visually challenged people to approach climbing, then evolved into the “#ioarrampico” project, implemented with the instructor Valeria De Luca at the Up Urban Climbing centre in Bologna.
- “Il Corno alle Scale in mountain bike” was a project that saw the production, by Massimo Gherardi, of a topographic map (named after the project) for excursionists and the photo exhibition “Sport makes it”.
- Moreover, in 2001 a climbing wall named “MatteiRock” was created at the gym of the “Istituto Enrico Mattei” in San Lazzaro di Savena (a high school cluster in Bologna), at the urging of the Director Marialuisa Quintabà and Massimo Lambertini, in collaboration with the Association “Noi scuole”.

During his mandate he acted as expert witness in public inquiries, set up by the Municipality of Bologna, into the overcoming of handicaps (2008) and welfare policies (2010).

Besides designing the institutional logo, he invented and registered the “Sports makes it” brand and granted right of use – free of charge – to the Fondazione Silvia Rinaldi in 2017. He also invented the successful institutional *pay offs* “Le regole del gioco diventano inclusive” (The rules of the game become inclusive) and “Lo sport è connessione sociale” (Sport means social connection).

## 2009

There was a change of sensitivity in Italy towards people who were first defined as “diversamente abili” (differently abled) and then “persone con disabilità” (**people with disabilities**), not least as the result of the law implementing the UN Convention of 24<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

A lexical process underlying the difficulty of cataloguing children, adolescents and adults with specific needs. People who often open up completely and surprisingly new paths in sports, and not only sports, as a precise result of their disability.

## 2009-2016

Alberto Benchimol continued to act as instructor and technical tutor during specialisation courses on disability for skiing instructors, Alpine guides and Mid-Mountain escorts. In particular, he welcomed sight impaired trainees and people affected by autistic spectrum disorders to courses organized by the Collegi Maestri di Sci of Trentino and Val d’Aosta, by the Autonomous Province of

Trento, the Fondazione Trentina per l'autismo, the Fondazione accademia per la montagna del Trentino (now Accademia per la montagna del Trentino) and the Trentino School of Management. In 2009 he proposed the first city handbike competition, hosted by the running competition "Strabologna", organized by UISP – Provincial Committee of Bologna.

In 2015 he created and curated the photo exhibition "Sport makes it", inaugurated in Arco (Trento) in the presence of the mountaineer Tamara Lunger. The exhibition was later presented in Bologna and Porto Torres (Sassari, Sardinia), during some sports and disabilities initiatives.

## **2016**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October, after a change in Chairmanship led to the loss of Giuliano Rinaldi's close cooperation, Alberto Benchimol resigned irrevocably as Secretary General to the Board of Directors, a post he had held since 2006.

While waiting for a communication to founders from the family of Mr. Rinaldi concerning the motivations and the resolutions adopted, it was noted that, on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020, the name of the homonymous foundation had been changed, without modifying the legal entity created in 2006.

Benchimol nevertheless maintains his ties and participation, though without directorial roles, in the reality that was created by him and of which he was **promoter and founder**.

### **Sportfund for a new vision of inclusive sports is born**

On December 23<sup>rd</sup> of the same year, in order to continue his experience and promote a new vision of **inclusive sports encompassing an increasing number of people with disabilities and young people facing social hardships, Benchimol created – with a group of experts in sports, social issues, architecture and law – Sportfund Fondazione per lo sport Onlus.**

The group of founders included:

- **Simone Bee**, a mountain bike and Nordic walking instructor with many years of experience in disability. Together with Francesca Fergnani, he organizes the Nordic walking training area. Simone Bee and Giovanna Minuto bring to the foundation their irreplaceable experience as the parents of Alessandro: a very young skier and climber affected by trisomy 21.
- **Rossella Buttazzi**, a criminal lawyer committed to the defence of children and people facing hardships and who has fought for rights against social disadvantages since the beginning of her university career. She has worked both nationally and internationally. She acted as trained in legal matters during the FASI (Federazione arrampicata sportiva italiana) course for SpecialClimb Instructors (2015) and the course for 1<sup>st</sup> level Instructors held in Emilia-Romagna and Marche (2016). She is a FASI Climbing Sports Instructor specialized in teaching people with disabilities. In the Organizational Chart of Sportfund Fondazione per lo sport Onlus, she designs and develops activities.
- **Federico Comini**, a biosystematic psychologist and psychotherapist. He is a member of CSA, Cooperativa Sociale Autismo, for which he teaches specialization courses on autistic spectrum disorders for skiing instructors, Alpine Guides and Mid Mountain escorts organized

by the Collegio maestri di sci of Trentino, the Fondazione Trentina per l'autismo, the Fondazione accademia per la montagna del Trentino (now Accademia per la montagna del Trentino) and by the Trentino School of Management.

- **Simone Elmi**, an Alpine Guide – mountaineering Instructor – specialized in accompanying people with disabilities, Chairmen of Asd Dolomiti Open and creator of the homonymous project to promote the mountains, and specifically the Dolomites, as a place for social inclusion.

In 2017 he designed the innovative project “La falesia dimenticata” [The Forgotten Crag]. The target was to purchase through crowdfunding and regain the former climbing crag of San Lorenzo – Dorsino (Trento) and to open a section dedicated to inclusive climbing for people with disabilities.

- **Francesca Fergnani**, an instructor in charge of the technical and training area for Nordic walking and a Guide of the Italian Federation Winter Paralympic Sports for visually challenged skiers.

Francesca is a specialist in functional psychomotor skills with a degree in Sports Sciences and specialization in Science and Techniques of preventive and adapted sports activities. Francesca has a ten-year experience in teaching sports to people with disabilities and has collaborated in particular with the Local Health Unit in Bologna – Disabled Adult Sector – and the Municipality of San Lazzaro di Savena (Bologna) – Minors’ integration sector. She has collaborated with the Municipality of Bologna in the initiative “Parchi in movimento”, aimed at promoting sports for a healthier and safer lifestyle, since its first edition.

- **Loredana Ponticelli and Cesare Micheletti**, architects and landscape architects, experts in inclusive design in Alpine areas.

They have accumulated experience and design projects to allow autonomous use of outdoor mountain spaces by people with different needs and activities. In order to enhance the natural heritage, they curated the nomination of the Dolomites as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, thus highlighting, with specific projects, the theme of accessibility for all activities at high altitudes.

- **Giulia Voltolini**, a professional health educator.

She is a member of CSA, Cooperativa Sociale Autismo, through which she teaches specialization courses on autistic spectrum disorders for Skiing Instructors, Alpine Guides and Mid-Mountain escorts organized by the Collegio maestri di Sci del Trentino, the Fondazione Trentina per l'autismo, the Fondazione accademia per la montagna del Trentino (now Accademia per la montagna del Trentino) and the Trentino School of Management.

Sportfund Chairman and Legal representative is **Alberto Benchimol**.

Accounting and Financial Reporting Manager is **Giovanna Minuto**.

