

## **Initiative „Dancing keeps you healthy“ – How Social Dance can support your health**

*Statement by KR Dipl.Vw. Ferenc Polai, Owner of Dancing schools, World Dance Council, Chairman Social Dance Committee, Speaker of Dance Schools at the Austrian Economic Chamber*

Today, we want to introduce the initiative “Dancing keeps you healthy” to you. Beginning in Tyrol, extending to the other states of Austria and other countries, it is about pointing out the health supporting effects of social dancing and bringing this to the attention of the general public. Furthermore, special workshops will be offered in social dance schools in Austria in cooperation with the Austrian Federation of Social Dance schools (VTÖ). Dance teachers will be educated by experts and dance schools who participate in this project will receive a logo. Therefore, interested customers can be sure that the teachers there have the knowledge not only about steps but also about how to make an impact concerning the health supporting effects of dancing.

Cardiovascular and neurological diseases like Alzheimer’s disease and strokes are the biggest challenges for an aging society. They are responsible for human sorrow but also for immense economic spending for therapy and care. Our project “Dancing keeps you healthy” wants to show through a cooperation from various areas like politics, medicine, science and social dance schools that regular social dancing is not only fun and enriching life but has a remarkable effect in terms of health prevention and savings potential for the healthcare system.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) believes that daily movement is good for health. But there is no other sport that has so many positive effects on us like dancing, especially social dancing. By now, a lot of scientific papers have proven the health preventive and supportive effects of dancing. Prof. Berger, Prof. Schobersberger and Mag. Wolf will present some interesting results in their statements.

### **The effect of social dancing on us**

Different to repetitive sports like tennis, football or boxing, regular social dancing supports and demands much more, amongst other points:

- Dancing improves fitness and therefore prevents cardiovascular diseases
- Different muscles have to be trained to be able to be activated and coordinated in order to achieve a good posture both statically and while in motion
- Dancing supports the visual and spatial idea since dancing is performed together with other people on the floor
- Learning, remembering and executing new steps and combinations not only supports muscular coordination but also brain activities – a great prevention from dementia
- Dancing means translating music into motion. Therefore, the auditory senses will be educated and the coordination of the left and right brain will be enforced
- When dealing with a dance partner, eyes play an equally important role to tactile senses in order to facilitate a balanced movement together
- Dancing also has social effects since it will connect people and can therefore prevent loneliness in a higher age.

In many areas, dancing is already used as a therapy. Therefore, social dancing could be used as prevention. Bigger companies could offer free dance classes for their employees at the work place, health insurances could support classes by offering vouchers to participants. Also, private health care institutions could use dance classes in their prevention programs.

## **Taking the lead in health support and prevention through social dancing**

Many envy Austria for its ball and dance culture and many are fascinated about the high social value of Social Dancing. Austria therefore has the chance to take the lead in health support through social dancing.

Of course, a dance school will never substitute a doctor. Diseases have to be diagnosed and treated by doctors. But regularly attending dance classes, dancing also outside of a dance school, can help to prevent certain diseases, absorb the effects of some other and therefore play an important role in improving the well-being.

An interdisciplinary team of researchers, including those experts present, as well a group of other renowned scientists from Hungary, will support the project "Dancing keeps you healthy". In the state of Tyrol, the State Minister for Health, Univ.-Prof. Dr. Tilg supports this program.

The next step will be to educate social dance teachers. This task will be fulfilled by psychologists, neurologists, cardiologists and sport scientists.

A kick-off event will take place in the Event Centre of Villa Blanka Tourism Schools in Innsbruck. Afterwards, as already stated, more and similar activities will follow in other states.

Based on the experiences gained here, I will present this concept to the world's biggest dance teachers' organization, the World Dance Council (WDC). Being the Chairman of the WDC Social Dance Committee I will be able to communicate and reach people on a global scale. I would be glad, if this project will also be supported by the media!