

HC Košice - starting a new journey

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The history of ice-hockey in Košice spans back to the year 1921 and the community is preparing for the celebration of the 100th anniversary this year. HC Košice was founded in 1962 and it's the most successful club in Slovak hockey history with a record of two Czechoslovak and eight Slovak Championship titles as well as an Intercontinental cup title.

The name of the club gained worldwide reputation thanks to names such as Ladislav Troják, Bedřich Brunclík, Vincent Lukáč, Igor Liba, Peter Bondra, Ladislav Nagy, and many others.

U. S. Steel Košice (USSK) has been a general partner of the local hockey team since 2000 following the partnership of Východoslovenské železiarne Košice since 1967. USSK has also been a key partner of Steel arena opening back in 2006, hosting the IIHF ice-hockey world cup twice, as well as tens of other sports and cultural events. Thanks to the partnership, HC Košice used to be considered as the most stable club in the country.

COVID crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the hockey business crucially in March 2019, ending the season and leaving the clubs without the revenues from ticket sales in the most lucrative part of the season – the play-offs. HC Košice as well as Steel arena lost revenues worth more than one million Euros. The club had to be once again saved by its general partners despite the unfavorable situation in the steel industry.

However, the impacts of COVID have prevented any fans from returning to the stands also in the current season. HC Košice business results have been 40% dependent on the ticket sales revenues. Unlike the vast majority of other Slovak clubs, HC Košice also has to cope with huge Steel arena rental costs as well as the costs of operating the youth teams. Most of the other clubs do not run their youth teams and the fees for the stadium rentals are paid by the local municipality.

New beginning

Despite the difficult situation, the club started a new journey setting up a new vision and fighting the hardest battle in its history to save the youth academy, the club, and the Steel arena itself, too.

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The club wants to act as a leader in bringing in and implementing new trends, innovations, ways of management, and professional approach protecting fair play, demanding improvements in all aspects of hockey in Slovakia.

The future is now

Thanks to another AmCham member Ness Košice, the club is undergoing a crucial digital transformation annually saving thousands of Euros thanks to its own ticketing solution and earning thousands of Euros thanks to its own e-shop and auction system. The main asset and element of the IT strategy is data, which will be collected,

processed, and automatically used by artificial intelligence as a part of the business strategy. In 2025, the club should possess the most modern IT tools and be a regional pioneer in this area.

The club has started a transformation to a Community club in 2020, becoming a crucial local partner of the community. Thanks to the partnerships, HC Košice has been working on analyzing, evaluating and implementing innovative digital tools, such as Sense arena (a virtual practice center using VR) and Spiideo (a cloud-based streaming and video analytics tool with tremendous monetization options).

In addition, the club has been a proud member of the Alliance of European Hockey Clubs since 2016 with an active board member.

The main focus - youth

HC Košice is currently the most successful Slovak club in terms of bringing up talented players. There are currently four HC Košice players playing NHL including Erik Černák (last season Stanley cup winner with Tampa Bay Lightning), Tomáš Jurčo (Las Vegas Knights), Martin Marincin (Toronto Maple Leaves), and Christían Jaroš (Ottawa Senators).

Youngsters from Košice are key players across the majority of Slovak national youth teams. The club has hired and been investing in the development of progressive coaches using the most modern techniques and working hard to give the players all the required skills and knowledge, which are demanded today.

Nowadays, the club takes care of more than 300 youngsters playing for 11 teams. HC Košice has been trying to improve the training environment, too. Besides the Sense arena and Spiideo, the club has implemented a modern internal communication system (KIS) used for the management and two-way communication with the youth players and their parents. Thanks to the partners, the club is working on a new shooting cage and warm-up room.

On top of that, HC Košice is the key partner in the project of Regional ice-hockey academy, integrating hockey with education and health care. To make the career path complete, the club will be playing with its farm team in the second-highest competition to provide a smooth shift from youth to men hockey.

Together we rise

The hockey club in Košice has got an enormous business as well as community potential and importance. The vision, strategies, and innovations led by a team of passionate professionals and a huge talent pool are a great promise of a bright future. However, the club needs to find more partners and investors, who believe it is possible to create and run a professional club based on positive culture and true business and CSR values. Would you like to be a part of the story? Join us today.

