

# The Society for Physical Culture in Berlin: Awards Being Given Out to the Winners of “The Body-Shape Competition” (1912)

## Abstract

---

Around the turn of the century, societies for physical culture sprang up throughout Germany. These societies belonged to the larger German *Lebensreform* – or “life reform” – movement, which advocated healthier living through a return to nature, fresh air, exercise, natural food, experiments in communal housing, and new forms of spirituality, which often drew upon Eastern traditions. *Lebensreform* was a reaction to overcrowding, overwork, and poor living conditions, all of which resulted from Germany’s rapid industrialization in the late nineteenth century. The healthy, youthful body – as here evidenced by “the victors of the body shape contest” – became the unifying symbol for disparate currents within the larger health movement. It should be noted, however, that physical fitness and gymnastics clubs were not entirely new in Germany.

## Source

---



Source: bpk-Bildagentur, image number 20030754. For rights inquiries, please contact Art Resource at [requests@artres.com](mailto:requests@artres.com) (North America) or bpk-Bildagentur at [kontakt@bpk-bildagentur.de](mailto:kontakt@bpk-bildagentur.de) (for all other countries).

bpk

---

Recommended Citation: The Society for Physical Culture in Berlin: Awards Being Given Out to the Winners of “The Body-Shape Competition” (1912), published in: German History in Documents and Images,  
<<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/wilhelmine-germany-and-the-first-world-war-1890-1918/ghdi:image-2166>> [September 26, 2025].