

**Annual European Ultimate Championship Series (EUCS)
Open and Women’s Club Division
Proposal**

Version 3.1

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INTRODUCTION

After a successful European Ultimate Club Championships in July 2005 a working group of European Ultimate players proposes to create an annual European Ultimate Championship Series for open and women's clubs. A new tournament structure would be put in place as early as next season (2006) establishing the European Ultimate Championship Series (EUCS) which include both European Ultimate Club Regionals (EUCRs) and European Ultimate Club Finals (EUCFs). This annual championship series would allow top European clubs to compete against one another and crown European club champions. However, the proposed system is by no means perfect. The goal for the first year or two is to create a base structure and calendar in order to start the series and involve as many teams and nations as possible. The obvious and initial benefit of this tournament series would be better competition for the top European clubs and incentive for mid-level clubs to improve their games with the hope of making it to Finals (EUCFs).

Europe will be divided into four geographic regions. Each nation (or group of nations if they are very small) has the possibility to send a maximum number to teams to its European Ultimate Club Regional (EUCR) tournament. The ideal entry to an EUCR would be from a country's nationals results. However a national federation may also nominate its EUCR candidates. The teams at the EUCRs in turn compete to advance to the European Ultimate Club Finals (EUCFs).

Bids are awarded to the EUCRs and EUCFs using a system that combines automatic and wildcard bids based on the strength and/or size of nations and regions.

EUCR and EUCF tournaments will be standardized as much as possible in order to ensure fair seeding and important game-play throughout the tournaments. EUCR tournaments can be held from the second half of August to the first half of September and be centrally located in order to minimize travel times for regional teams. Other specific concerns in the region can be taken into account when deciding on location. The EUCFs will be held in mid-October in a nation offering the best bid. Attention will be paid to excellent fields and agreeable weather. Detailed guidelines for bidding will be available from the CSC (see below) in 2006.

With the goal being to increase the level of play in Europe, combining teams and picking up ringers for the tournament series is discouraged. This being a contentious issue, however, we ask that all National Federations submit a vote on two different eligibility options offered below.

Both divisions of the championship series will be organized by committees of volunteers and an EFDF representative and will be called the Championship Series Committee (CSC). The CSC will have the final word on the rules of the championship series, location of the EUCFs, player eligibility and all other issues involved in organizing the EUCS. Players wishing to join the CSC should make their interest known to the CSC.

Likewise, in each region National Federations will appoint open and women's representatives who will coordinate the EUCRs. Volunteers essential to the operation of the Series include committee members who specialize in elements of competition such as rules, eligibility and tournament formats.

By implementing this system it's hoped that the level of European Club play will quickly attain the level of North American, Japanese and Australian Ultimate.

EUCS REGIONS

For the Championships Series, Europe shall be divided into four regions. These regions will be composed of “nearest neighbor” nations to reduce cost and travel time to EUCR tournaments. These annual tournaments will determine which teams will gain a bid to the EUCFs. Qualification for the regional tournaments will be based upon either National Country Championships, in the current or previous calendar year, or nomination by a country’s ruling federation (see qualification for the EUCRs/EUCFs). Using the regionals system, most teams will not have to travel far or spend too much money to determine whether they will make it to the EUCFs or not.

Regions will be formed not only geographically but also on strength of region. It’s hoped that each region will be roughly equivalent and will therefore qualify an equivalent number of teams to the EUCFs. The regions then are as follows:

- **North East** – *Denmark?*, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, (Belarus), (Norway), (Iceland).
- **Central East** – *Denmark?*, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, (Poland), (Slovenia), (Croatia).
- **West** – United Kingdom, Ireland
- **South West** – Switzerland, France, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Israel.

Denmark’s regional placement has yet to be decided. Countries in parenthesis either haven’t got a national federation, an international representative listed with EFDF (but organized play is known to exist), or haven’t participated in EFDF/WFDF events the past 10 years. If one region becomes dominant, then a re-organization should occur.

Each Region must decide upon a central venue to hold a regional tournament, ideally with costs and travel times kept to a minimum. The purpose of a regional tournament is to not only qualify teams for the EUCFs but to measure the strength of teams against each other in the region.

EUCR BID ALLOCATION

The first step for qualifying for the EUCFs is to qualify for an EUCR tournament. Europe is made up of 28 Ultimate playing nations and these have been grouped together into four different geographic regions. The best teams from each nation in the four regions will, every August/September, play a two or three-day tournament to determine qualifiers for the EUCFs.

Nations will make up the bulk of regions in the open division. Each nation which plays a national championship tournament with at least 10 club teams shall gain one automatic bid to an EUCR tournament. No nation may have less than one bid to an EUCR tournament although initially there is no restriction on how many teams a region may send. Nations with less than 10 club teams shall join together (called a section) and play a series or championship to determine qualifiers for the EUCR. Likewise, these sections can have no less than one bid to an EUCR tournament.

An open EUCR tournament can have as many as 16 participating clubs, although a regional committee may expand or reduce the tournament. For the 2006 EUCS tournaments, nations/sections may nominate clubs to the EUCRs. Subsequent bids to EUCRs will be allocated by results from the previous EUCR. Each year the two nations/sections with the lowest placing teams in an EUCR will lose one bid in the next EUCR tournament, providing the loss of bid does not eliminate the one automatic bid allocated above. In that case only one bid is allocated.

A women's EUCR tournament can have as many as 16 participating clubs, although a regional committee may expand or reduce the tournament. For the 2006 EUCS tournaments, it is not anticipated that any region in the women's division will have more than 16 teams. Therefore, nations may nominate clubs to the EUCRs for 2006. However, as participation in EUCRs increases, Regions will be split into nations/sections and tournament results of Sectionals (or a country's Nationals if the two are the same) will form the basis of qualification to EUCRs. Each nation/section will be guaranteed at least one automatic bid to the EUCR.

The position of the lowest placed teams from each nation/section will be compared and the nations/section with the highest finishing lowest placed team will gain an extra bid in the next EUCR tournament. The rest of the bids remain unchanged. If the loss of a bid would eliminate a country or section from an EUCR, then only the nation with the highest finishing lowest placed team would gain that bid.

If a team from a nation/section turns down a bid to an EUCR tournament, then the next best team will qualify for the EUCR bid. If a nation/section cannot send the same number of teams as it has bids, then the free bids will be allocated to the nation/section which had the highest finishing lowest placed team in the previous EUCR. By being unable to field a team to fill an allocated bid spot a nation/section, however, will forfeit a bid for the next year provided it has more than its one automatic bid.

In conclusion, then, it is important for teams to do as well as possible at their EUCR tournament in order to earn their nation/section as many bids as possible in the following year's EUCR. A good showing by a nation's/section's teams will ensure their nation/section gets a lot of spots at the EUCRs and enhances their nation's/section's chances of being represented in the EUCFs.

EUCF BID ALLOCATION

The best teams from each regions will, every October, play a three-day tournament to determine the European Club Champion. Bids to the 2006 EUCF will be distributed according to results from the 2005 EUCCs, by the CSC.

The Open EUCF tournament will be a three-day tournament between 16 teams who have earned the right to represent their regions at an EUCR tournament. Each region will be assigned two automatic bids to the EUCF tournament. Further, eight wild-card bids will be allocated based on a region's cumulative finish in the previous year's EUCF tournament.

The Women's EUCF tournament will be a three-day tournament between 12 teams who have earned the right to represent their regions at an EUCR tournament. Each region will be assigned two automatic bids to the EUCF tournament. Further, four wild-card bids will be allocated based on a region's cumulative finish in the previous year's EUCF tournament.

To determine these wild cards, each region's worst finishing teams are compared. The two regions with the lowest finishing teams lose one bid in the following year's EUCFs. The two regions with the two highest placed lowest finishing teams will gain one bid each. No region may have more than six bids to any one EUCF or less than two.

If the loss of a bid would mean the elimination of an automatic bid, then the remaining free bid is assigned to the region with the best placed lowest finishing team. However, if this means that a region exceeds the six bid limit, then this bid goes to the region with the next best placed lowest finishing team.

If a team from a region turns down a bid to the EUCF tournament, then the next best team from that region will qualify for the EUCF bid. If a region cannot send the same number of teams as it has bids, then the free bids will be allocated to the region which had the best worst finishing team in the previous EUCF. By being unable to field a team to fill an allocated bid spot a region will forfeit a bid for the next year provided it has more than its two automatic bids.

In conclusion, then, it is important for teams to do as well as possible at their EUCF tournament in order to earn their region as many bids as possible in the following year's EUCF. A good showing by a region's teams will ensure their region gets as many chances as possible to claim the championship.

EUCR TOURNAMENT CRITERIA

The tournament format used for the EUCRs will be standardized in order to achieve fair seeding and important game-play throughout each regional tournament. A minimum of four full-sized playing fields are necessary to host an EUCR tournament.

Ideally annual EUCRs will be three-day tournaments with a maximum of a 16-team field. However, if fewer teams participate, an EUCR may be shorter. EUCR formats and schedules will be finalized by EUCR organizers, EUCR tournament directors and the CSC.

EUCRs may be held from the second half of August to the third weekend of September. Ideally EUCRs will be held early as possible to allow teams who qualify for the EUCFs to make travel and lodging arrangements.

For a three-day tournament, as an example, seeding will be "semi-random" meaning no team is seeded number one or number 16. Rather, teams will be grouped according to their seeding either in groups of 2 or 4 (2-2-4-4-4) and a draw will occur, i.e. at a captains' meeting prior to the start of games, to determine pools. Seeding is based on the following criteria:

- previous EUCF (or EUCC) finish
- previous EUCR finish
- placement in current national or sectional tournament
- strength of national or sectional placement in previous EUCR

Three day tournaments should use the following game-play format (3-2-2 for upper bracket teams and 3-3-1 for lower bracket teams):

- **1st day:** three pool games.
- **2nd day,** pre-quarter cross over seeding games (1v4, 2v3) followed by quarterfinals and lower bracket semi-finals
- **3rd day** upper-bracket semi-finals followed by placement games (3-16) and Finals.

Shorter tournament formats and game play will be decided by EUCR organizing committee and EUCR tournament directors.

The minimal EUCR game length should be short enough to allow four games per day (in the case of a two-day tournament). Longer games, to 15 points, win by 2 with a point cap at 17 and time cap of 80 minutes is encouraged. On the tournament's third day, the WFDF/EFDF standard of games to 17, win by 2, point cap at 21 and time cap 100 minutes will be used.

EUCF TOURNAMENT CRITERIA

Initially the EUCFs will be a three-day tournament, being held no later than the third week in October. An open bidding process for the tournament will be held annually and will be awarded to the best bid. Excellent fields and good weather will be taken into consideration when the bid is being awarded. More detailed bidding guidelines will be available next year (2006).

The Open EUCFs will be 16-team tournament. The Women's EUCFs will be a 12-team tournament until the CSC determines the division is sufficiently competitive to expand into a 16-team tournament.

Open Seeding will be "semi-random" meaning no team is seeded number one or number 16. Rather, teams will be grouped according to their seeding either in 2 or 4 groups (2-2-4-4-4) and a draw will occur, i.e. at a captains' meeting prior to the start of games, to determine pools. Seeding is based on the following criteria:

- a team's finish at the previous year's EUCF (or EUCC),
- a team's finish at the actual EUCR
- strength of regional finish the previous year.

Tournaments will be three-days and use the following format (3-2-2 for upper bracket teams and 3-3-1 for lower bracket teams):

- **1st day:** three pool games.
- **2nd day,** pre-quarter cross over seeding games (1v4, 2v3) followed by quarterfinals and lower bracket semi-finals
- **3rd day** upper-bracket semi-finals followed by placement games (3-16) and Finals.

All games are played to 15 points, win by 2 with a point cap at 17 and time cap of 80 minutes. On the tournament's third day, WFDF/EFDF standard of games to 17, win by 2, point cap at 21 and time cap 100 minutes will be used.

EUCS PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

Perhaps the most contentious point of the proposed championships is player eligibility. At issue is whether we wish to set strict rules for EUCS eligibility or whether we wish, at this point, to let SOTG, within guidelines, predominate. Please read the options below and then, submit your vote prior to Jan.15 to the CSC at ucs-eligibility@efdf.org. Your Federation's vote should reflect the choice of the clubs in your nation.

Option one

Player eligibility is based on three basic definitions, of which a player needs to fulfill at least one:

- A player must have played for the team in one of the last two most recent national championships
- A player must have practiced and played with the team for at least four months prior to the EUCS and not competed in that team's division with another team during that period at a national championship, national series or WFDF/EFDF sanctioned club or series event.
- A player must be a member of a team that is recognized as a feeder or development team to the participating club team and the player is being added to the roster to increase the depth of the team. National federations are responsible for defining such connections between teams

Option two

Player eligibility is based on an honor system (SOTG) where picking up players for the tournament series is discouraged although not prohibited. The criteria for this option are:

- teams are encouraged to set their rosters at the beginning of each year and use only rostered players for their National Championships and the EUCS.
- teams may merge for the championship series although it is hoped that teams which do merge will play an entire season together rather than merging for just the EUCS.
- teams may pick up players for EUCS either before or after country nationals although this practice is highly discouraged.

One of the major goals of the EUCS is to create clubs which are strong enough to compete with north American, Australian and Japanese clubs. This is why player eligibility is so important and why we wish to settle the question immediately. It is also why we hope teams will comply with the rules should option one win, or with the SOTG should option two prevail. Players and teams should keep the long-term goal of the EUCS in sight and that is to create stronger more competitive European Ultimate Clubs.

Exemptions in the Women's Division

It is strongly recommended that women's teams consider the size of their roster before the season begins and recruit as necessary to ensure a sufficiently large pool of players. The CSC encourages all women's teams to look locally for new players rather than recruiting players from other regions/countries with fledgling women's teams.

If a team still lacks numbers despite its best recruiting efforts, exemptions to the eligibility rule will be allowed at the discretion of the CSC. No limit shall be placed upon the number of exemptions a team will be allowed. The CSC will base its decision for each exemption request upon individual circumstance, roster size, and SOTG. Exemptions will, for instance, help smaller countries enter national teams instead of a club team, should no club team exist. The decision of the CSC is final. This exemption rule will be reviewed in the future.

CONCLUSION

Currently European Ultimate consists of many tournaments of which none have any real overall competitive value. It's nice to win Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Paganello, a Tour or a national country championship, but the competition is limited to those who choose or can afford to travel to a tournament. There are many smaller weekend tournaments which are great fun to play in, but are of not much benefit for top level clubs because of the dramatic drop-off in competition. This is why there is a glaring need for top level club tournament each year.

The EUCS' goal is fourfold; to create an annual club champion, to provide teams with an annual measurement of their play plus the incentive to improve, to allow players to achieve their maximum potential and to raise the level of play throughout the continent. By implementing this system it's hoped that the level of European Club play will quickly attain the level of North American, Japanese and Australian Ultimate.