

Only two days to go until the opening of the 2026 Paddle Europe Freestyle Championships!

We can now confirm the participating countries, and athletes are joining from Austria, Spain, France, The UK, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Poland, and Switzerland – and Finland is of course sending a team as well. The Finnish team has the advantage of having paddled this exact feature for years, and kayakers frequenting international events like Visa Rahkola, Tuomas Kaukola, Olli Nyrhilä and Miika Sorjonen are strong candidates for the finals.

The competition is expected to be thrilling, since many successful kayakers have made their way to this corner of Europe. The gold medallist of the latest Europeans, Poland's Tomasz Czaplicki, has arrived at the venue and is ready to defend his title. The current world champion – France's Tom Dolle – and the greatly renowned Joaquim Fontané Maso of Spain are however guaranteed to pose a serious challenge for him.

Since the current European champion in both K-1 and C-1 categories Otilie Robinson-Shaw is seeing this one out, the women's titles are up for grabs. The most pressure lands perhaps on the latest European silver medallist, Zofia Tula. Accompanied by Agata Sobieraj Jacunbiez, who gained fifth place in Graz's Europeans, and junior women's bronze medallist from Graz, Maja Kawczynska – who will still compete in the juniors – team Poland is definitely waiting for some medals. However, the two best juniors from Graz, Ireland's Leah Hough and Spain's Aisa Lopez-Arenas, are now competing in the women's and possess all the skills to steal the show.

The stars of Graz are also shining in the C1 category. The men's whole top 5, including Eoghan Kelly from Ireland, Sebastian Nelle from Germany, Matthew Stephenson from the UK, and Jean-Yves Moustrou and Tom Dolle from France are all participating, so the competition will be tight.

The preliminary schedule is now published, and can be found in <https://canoefreestyle-lieksa.fi/schedule/>, which is updated regularly.

The opening ceremony will be held in Lieksa City Centre Tue 09.06. at 18:00 local time.

The preliminaries will start Wed 10.06. at 11:30.

The finals will start Sat 13.06. at 11:00.