

The 2026 Paddle Europe Freestyle Championships have had a kickstart with official trainings and the opening ceremony.

The official trainings have been running since Monday, so all teams have had a chance at getting used to the feature. The water levels have stayed relatively stable and no major changes are expected during the competition week, which allows everyone to concentrate on perfecting their run instead of constantly adapting to a new environment. Training has also not been limited to the official hours as athletes have taken advantage of the constant sunlight that permits training at any hour – indeed kayakers have been spotted on the feature all night long.

The athletes' commentary of the playspot has been positive, as basically any trick can be executed – and based on the trainings we should expect an exciting mix of both wave and hole tricks on the competition. However, no tricks ever come for free, and the current water level requires competitors to put on lots of effort in order to score any trick.

The opening ceremony was held in Lieksa City Centre on Tuesday evening. Marching through the very center of the city the athletes attracted lots of local crowd, and the city welcomed the athletes with beautiful landmarks. The Mayor of Lieksa, Pirre Seppänen, general secretary of Finnish Canoeing and Rowing Federation, Juho Allonen, and PEU VP, Andrej Jelenc gave speeches, and the participants could enjoy some local brass music as a snippet from the upcoming annual brass music week of the city.

Tomorrow we will start the day with our 2026 Euro Freestyle Cadets. This event is designed for young athletes under 15 to gain valuable experience of international competing and also to showcase their skills. The athletes will be participating in the competition as if they had their own competition class, and will be judged by the official judges of the competition. However, this category is not official. After the cadets, we will compete K1 Women and K1 Junior Men.