

On Saturday 13th of June 2026, the Paddle Europe Freestyle Championships moved into finals. Each category delivered excellent kayaking and big emotions, as this year's best kayakers of Europe were chosen. The atmosphere was very encouraging, putting into action that team spirit that the athletes have talked about in interviews.

In C1W Germany's Lucia Hacker moved from her second place on the semi-finals into the first one, making her the European Champion of 2026. Germany took double medals from this category, as Naya Daruwala got silver. Great Britain's Ottilie Burrill Smith got bronze, leaving Poland's Zofia Tula just 6,67 points behind her.

In C1M, France's Tom Dolle continued on his chain of gold medals from last year, as he won every competition he participated in, and took the first place in this category as well. This was clear already on his very last competition ride, which he spent having fun and entertaining the crowd by some silly moves, his fellow countryman and silver medallist of the category, Abel Thenevet joining him in the wave after the buzzer. The bronze medal went to Matthew Stephenson of Great Britain, giving him his first medal in any European Championship competition.

After the C1 categories it was time to showcase the cadets, where 3 young contestants under 15 were judged by the official ICF rules on their 45 second runs, if not through a slightly less strict lens. On girls we had Alicia Pedersen from Norway, who won the category with an excellent score of 445 points, and Mar Marti Boada from Spain got second place. She was also the youngest attendant of the event, being only 12 years old. On boys we had one contestant, Jack Minchin from Ireland. All the cadets showed very much potential, and they will hopefully be seen on the official competitions in a couple years.

We had some of the senior contestants competing with the younger ones, lessening their advantage by giving them obstacles like kayaking blindfolded or without a paddle – making a very entertaining show. Another show was given by some log floaters, who showcased the Finnish tradition of log floating. A log is going downstream, and the floater stands on the log maintaining balance even when going through the competition feature.

The junior men's K1 category kept up the high scores from the preliminaries and semi-finals, with Great Britain's Math Cradock securing the first place with a run of 1031,67 points. France's Arhur Genovese won silver with 973,33 points, and Germany's Lukas Ramsayer won bronze with 961,67 points.

Junior women's K1 category experienced a total turnaround of the places from the semi-finals, as the Poland's Maja Kawczynska rose to the first place after getting into the finals from fifth place. Germany's Linn Schaefer took silver, having been fourth on the semi-finals, and Ireland's Mea Minchin kept her third place, winning bronze. Finland's Nea Rautio dropped from her second place in the semi-finals to fourth on the finals, and the winner of the semi-finals, Germany's Marie Dimke, came fifth on the finals.

Women's K1 finals were a celebration of young talent, all three medallists having just advanced from the juniors' category onto seniors' within two years. Finland's Taru Terni took the gold medal with 626,67 points, giving the hosting country a reason to celebrate. The last time Finland has gotten home from the Europeans with this category's gold medal, it was her mother Marjaana Terni who won it. Ireland's Leah Hough took the second place with 586,67 points, and the bronze medal went to Great Britain's Isabella Wormall, who topped Austria's Jasmin Stangl-Brachnik with only 3,33 points. The European vice champion until now, Poland's Zofia Tula, kayaked herself into the fifth place.

The men's K1 category offered excitement and world-class kayaking, as the European Champion from Graz, Poland's Tomasz Czaplicki kept his title with an incredible run of 1701,67 points. France's Tom Dolle and his snappy Guigui boat came second, with a run of 1603,33 points. He was the only person to win 2 medals in this competition, highlighting his multi-disciplinary talent. Poland got double medals from this category, as Bartosz Czauderna took the third place. Ireland's David McLure came fourth with 1211,67 points, and Finland's Vira Rahkola came fifth with 975 points.

All in all, Germany, France, and Great Britain won 4 medals, Poland 3, Ireland 2 and Finland 1 medal. These finals show wrapped up the 2026 Paddle Europe Freestyle Championships, leaving the contestants to travel home with big grins, new friends and unforgettable memories.