EUROPEAN ATHLETICS UNDER 20 CHAMPIONSHIPS

The European Athletics U20 Championships are open to athletes under 20, the age group recognized by World Athletics as junior athletes. The event is organized by the European Athletic Association and is held every two years.

The history of the competition dates back to the European Junior Games, which were first held in 1964, followed by 1966 and 1968. The European Junior Championships were established in 1970 and were renamed the European U20 Championships in 2017. There have been 28 editions held to date, and the men's 10,000m track walk has always been present.
The women's race walk made its debut in 1985 in Cottbus (GDR) with the 5,000, track walk. This distance was run until the 1999 edition in Riga, Latvia. Starting in Grosseto, Italy, in 2001, the distance was extended to 10,000 m track, also for women.

The edition with the highest number of participants was the 2015 edition held in Eskilstuna, Sweden, with 28 athletes competing in the men's race and 26 in the women's race. The highest number of nations in the men's race was in Tampere in 2025, with 18 nations present. And in the women's races, in Tallinn in 2021, with 16 nations present.

Over the 28 editions, there have been few stops for incorrect walking. In the men's races, the highest number of disqualifications occurred in four races, each with four athletes DQed. The two races with the highest percentages were the 1997 race in Ljubljana and the 2009 race in Novi Sad, where four of the 19 starters received red flags, representing 21% of the total number of athletes. In the women's races, four races also had the highest number of red flags.

Three women were DQed in these races, and the worst race in terms of percentage was the Novi Sad race, with 16% of the total number of disqualifications.

The men's championship records belong to Spain's Joan Querol (ESP), who clocked 39:10 in Tampere (Finland) 2025.
The women's best 5,000m finisher was Claudia Iovan-Stef (ROU), who triumphed in Ljubljana (Slovenia) in 1997 with a time of 21:15.99. The fastest 10,000m finisher is Yelena Lashmanova (RUS), who won in Tallinn (East) in 2011 with a time of 42:59.44.

Several athletes have won medals in two consecutive editions. Among the men we find:

- the Russian Mikola Vynnychenko (USSR) bronze in Athens (GRE) 1975 and gold in Donetsk (USSR) in 1977.
- the Spanish Germán Nieto third in Birmingham (GBR) in 1987 and second in Varadžin (Yug) in 1989
- the Italian Giovanni De Benedictis third in 1985 in Cottbus (DDR) and winner in Birmingham (GBR) in 1987;
- The other Italian Michele Didoni won bronze in 1991 in Thessaloniki (Greece) and gold in San Sebastian (España) in 1993;
- Finally the other Italian Giuseppe Disabato third in 2023 in Jerusalem (Isr) and second in Tampere (Finland) in 2025.

Among the women, the multiple medalists are:

- María Cruz Díaz of Spain, gold in the first women's edition in 1985 in Cottbus (GDR) and silver in Birmingham (GBR) in 1987;
- East German Kathrin Born, bronze in 1987 and gold in 1989;
- Portugal's Susana Feitor, second in 1991 and gold in San Sebastian (España) in 1993;
- Russia's Natalya Trofimova, third and second in 1991 and 1993;
- Turkey's Meryem Bekmez finished third in Grosseto (Italy) in 2017 and first in Borås (Sweden) in 2019.
- Finally, Spain's Sofia Santacreu, the only woman to win back-to-back titles, won gold in Jerusalem (Israel) in 2023 and Tampere (Finland) in 2025.

The most medaled nation in the men's event is Russia, with 7 gold, 6 silver, and 1 bronze. Russia is followed by Spain (4 gold, 5 silver, 9 bronze) and Italy (4 gold, 4 silver, 5 bronze). Russia's dominance in the women's event is even clearer, with 8 gold, 9 silver, and 6 bronze.
Spain came in second (3 gold 3 silver, 4 bronze), and Portugal in third (2 gold, 2 silver, 1 bronze).