



SELECTION POLICY

EUROPEAN CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS: Belgrade, Serbia, December 13 2026

GENERAL INFORMATION

IMPORTANT DATES		
Date	Event	Notes
1 October 2026 (On/Before)	National Team Declaration Form (NTDF)	Online Declaration of Interest form here
8 November 2026 (On/Before)	Dispensation Request (for not competing at National Championships)	Online Dispensation Request form Here
22 November 2026	Athletics Ireland National Cross Country Championships	
25 November 2026	Final selection all events on or before this date	Names published after selection date on AAI website

1. SELECTION POLICY PERFORMANCE CONDITIONS:

1.1 Performances must be achieved during competitions organised or authorised in conformity with rules set by WA, EA, NCAA, LOC and its Area Associations or its Member Federations.

2. ENTRY RULES:

2.1 **Categories/Distances:** The program comprises of seven categories with all distances yet to be confirmed by European Athletics:

- U20 Women (5000m)
- U20 Men (5000m)
- U23 Women (6500m)
- U23 Men (6500m)
- Senior Women (8000m)
- Senior Men (8000m)
- Senior Mixed Relay (4 x loop, total 6500m)

2.2 Each of the categories, except the senior mixed relay, will include an Individual Event and a Team Event held concurrently.

Age Requirements

2.3 Only athletes aged at least 16 (sixteen) and not more than 19 (nineteen) years on 31 December of the year of the competition may participate in the U20 events;

2.4 Only athletes aged at least 20 (twenty) and not more than 22 (twenty-two) years on 31 December of the year of the competition may participate in the Under 23 events;

2.5 Only athletes aged at least twenty (20) years on 31 December of the year of the competition may compete in the senior events.

3. SELECTION PHILOSOPHY

Athletics Ireland's philosophy and team objectives for selection to the 2026 European Cross Country Championships are to select teams or individual athletes in any category where the evidence base suggests that we have sufficient quality and depth, coupled with optimal preparation, to confidently predict a successful outcome both in terms of:

- final individual and team standing, which should be reflective of Ireland's strong tradition of success in these championships and in the sport of cross country running generally, and
- making a positive contribution to individual athlete development, particularly at U20 and U23 grades, with the aim of successfully transitioning age-category athletes through the categories and into full senior international status in the coming years.

4. SELECTION PROCESS:

Participation Criteria

4.1 Nothing in this Policy obliges Athletics Ireland to select a full contingent of individuals in any particular event regardless of the entry rules set by the European Athletics. Athletics Ireland will select Individual(s)/Team(s) according to the criteria set out in this Policy as allowed by entry rules for the event.

Eligibility

4.2 In order to be eligible for selection all athletes must:

- 4.2.1** Fill out a [National Team Declaration Form](#) on AAI website on or before the published date.
- 4.2.2** Satisfy all World Athletics eligibility, nationality and European Cross Country championship participation rules.
- 4.2.3** Hold a current valid Irish passport.
- 4.2.4** Be a registered member of Athletics Ireland.
- 4.2.5** Remain in “good standing” with Athletics Ireland and at all times comply with any established code of conduct or athlete agreement and otherwise conduct themselves in a way that does not bring their sport or the National Team into disrepute.
- 4.2.6** Have received certification for having completed the European Athletics Anti-Doping Education Programme – [I Run Clean](#).

General Selection Criteria

4.3 The Selectors may “exercise their sole and overriding discretion” to select any athlete(s) or a team that meets with the eligibility and entry rules of the 2026 European Cross Country Championships.

- 4.3.1** The Selectors may consider any factor or combination of factors that, in their opinion, are relevant to the selection of an athlete or a team, including, but not necessarily limited to:
 - A.** Consistency and repeatability of performances during the domestic and international seasons. Repeatability indicates consistency of performance and soundness of athlete preparation necessary to compete at the championships;
 - B.** Statistical data (ranking/performance list, performance-time curves derived from longitudinal data);
 - C.** The history and performances at previous championships and competitions, in particular the history of the athlete’s on-demand performances at those championships by reference to the level of performance expected of the athlete at those championships.
 - D.** The competitive record of each athlete against other athletes under consideration for selection in the same event. Emphasis will be placed on such results achieved in national championship events, as will achievement of performance targets in championship conditions.
 - E.** The Final Phase Readiness and ability for the athletes to show fitness in the final build-up phase is a fundamental principle for selection.

Individual Selection Criteria

4.4 Athletes seeking selection for the European Cross Country Championships, except those seeking selection in the Senior Mixed Relay, must compete in the corresponding category (i.e. U20, U23, Senior) of competition at the 2026 Athletics Ireland National Cross Country Championships, **unless dispensation has been requested** ([Online Dispensation Request Form Here](#)), **and subsequently granted**, no later than 8 November 2026, except in the case of genuine exceptional circumstances, illness or injury verified by a medical certificate from a general practitioner or sports medicine specialist and validated by Athletics Ireland medical staff.

- 4.4.1** Dispensations will be at the sole discretion of the Selectors and will generally only be granted to athletes in exceptional circumstances.

U20 Criteria

4.5 The first three (3) finishing athletes (male & female) in the U20 Category at the National Cross Country Championships will gain automatic selection.

- 4.5.1** One (1) additional U20 Men’s and U20 Women’s selection will be made at the discretion of the Selectors and will be considered on an individual-by-individual basis with reference to section 4.3.
- 4.5.2** Selectors are not obligated to add any discretionary selections beyond the four (4) selections referenced in 4.5 and 4.5.1. and are not obligated to select the maximum allowable of six (6) athletes or any reserves. However, Selectors may consider adding a 5th selection, with reference to section 4.3, and with reference to Performance Guideline Standards detailed in Section 6, up to a total of five (5) athletes.

4.5.3 Selectors will only consider adding a 6th selection exclusively in the case where Selectors are convinced that the athlete under consideration is capable of being a scoring member of a medal winning team or has the potential to achieve an individual medal

4.5.4 Selectors may add up to two (2) non-travelling reserves.

Under 23 Criteria

4.6 The first two (2) finishing athletes (male & female) in the U23 Category at the National Cross Country Championships will gain automatic selection.

4.6.1 Two (2) additional U23 Men's and U23 Women's selections will be made at the discretion of the Selectors and will be considered on an individual-by-individual basis with reference to section 4.3.

4.6.2 Selectors are not obligated to add any discretionary selections beyond the four (4) selections referenced in 4.6 and 4.6.1. and are not obligated to select the maximum allowable of six (6) athletes or any reserves. However, Selectors may consider adding a 5th selection, with reference to section 4.3, and with reference to Performance Guideline Standards detailed in Section 6, up to a total of five (5) athletes.

4.6.3 Selectors will only consider adding a 6th selection exclusively in the case where Selectors are convinced that the athlete under consideration is capable of being a scoring member of a medal winning team or has the potential to achieve an individual medal

4.6.4 Selectors may add up to two (2) non-travelling reserves.

4.6.5 If an U23 athlete finishes in a senior selection position at the National Cross Country Championships they may be considered for selection for the European Cross Country senior category. The final decision on whether or not to select U23 athletes for the senior teams will rest with the Selectors, in consultation with the athlete.

Senior Criteria

4.7 The first three (3) finishing athletes (male & female) at the National Cross Country Championships will gain automatic selection for the Senior Men's and Senior Women's race.

4.7.1 One (1) additional Senior Men's and Senior Women's selections will be made at the discretion of the Selectors and will be considered on an individual-by-individual basis with reference to section 4.3.

4.7.2 Selectors are not obligated to add any discretionary selections beyond the four (4) selections referenced in 4.7 and 4.7.1. and are not obligated to select the maximum allowable of six (6) athletes or any reserves. However, Selectors may consider adding a 5th selection, with reference to section 4.3, and with reference to Performance Guideline Standards detailed in Section 6, up to a total of five (5) athletes.

4.7.3 Selectors will only consider adding a 6th selection exclusively in the case where Selectors are convinced that the athlete under consideration is capable of being a scoring member of a medal winning team or has the potential to achieve an individual medal

4.7.4 Selectors may add up to two (2) non-travelling reserves.

Senior Mixed Relay Criteria

4.8 Athletics Ireland will consider selecting a team to compete in the Senior Mixed Relay (2 Men + 2 Women) of 4 x 1 lap (approximately 1500m lap) only if:

4.8.1 Selectors believe a top-3 team finish is potentially achievable, and

4.8.2 The strength of the Senior Women's team or Senior Men's team is not significantly weakened by selection of key athletes to a Senior Mixed Relay Team.

4.8.3 As a guide, Selectors will expect that the Aggregate 2026 1500m Season's Best of the best available two (2) male and two (2) female athletes will be 15:30.00 or faster.

4.9 When considering a Senior Mixed Relay Team, selectors will use discretion, with reference to section 4.3) to consider two (2) men and two (2) women, plus one (1) male and one (1) female non-travelling reserve, from our pool of leading middle-distance athletes, who have proved current form and fitness up to and including 22 November 2026.

4.9.1 Athletes seeking selection in the Senior Mixed Relay are not obligated to compete at the national Cross Country Championships but may use that opportunity to demonstrate current form.

4.9.2 Athletes wishing to be considered for selection for the senior mixed relay should contact [Athletics Ireland Performance Endurance Lead](#) and provide a detailed performance plan by 1 September 2026.

4.9.3 Athletics Ireland aim to facilitate opportunities for middle-distance athletes to demonstrate form during the cross-country season prior to selection of the Mixed Relay Team. Selectors may consider scheduling a trial race for the Mixed Relay and will confirm details for same at the earliest possible opportunity. For further information in relation to opportunities to show form please contact [Athletics Ireland Performance Endurance Lead](#).

After Selection

4.10 All athletes selected may be required to prove their fitness to compete in the 2026 European Cross Country Championships by attaining a fitness standard, or some other appropriate performance as agreed with the athlete and their coach, and the Management Team **prior to the championships**.

4.10.1 Failure by a selected athlete to meet the pre-European XC Championship proof of fitness will, at the discretion of the Management Team, result in an athlete who has been initially selected to the team being withdrawn from the 2026 European Cross Country Championships competition.

4.10.2 For the purposes of clarity, it is the intended operation of this Policy that **all selections remain conditional** until the athlete has achieved the pre-Championships proof of fitness.

4.11 An athlete who enters the Athletics Ireland Team Camp and/or the European Cross Country Championship village will be subject to an injury evaluation/assessment by the championship Team Management staff. The injury evaluation/assessment will be carried out by Athletics Ireland's Physio (or appointed Team Physio) in consultation (if appropriate) with Athletics Ireland's Team Doctor.

4.11.1 If as a result of such injury evaluation/assessment the Team Doctor, Team Management staff, and Team Leader/Manager consider an athlete does not have the standard of fitness or is otherwise not in condition to compete due to injury at a level appropriate to the event(s) for which they have been selected, the Team Leader/Manager will withdraw the athlete from the competition.

4.12 Selected athletes who train and compete outside of Ireland must arrive back in Ireland, if required to do so by team management, within an agreed date prior to the European Cross Country Championships.

Selectors Meetings

4.13 The selectors are scheduled to meet and select athletes will be on or before 25 November 2026 for all events.

4.14 See the following link for [Selection Panel and the Terms of Reference](#).

Selection Queries

4.15 Athletes can seek clarification regarding selection policy from [Athletics Ireland Performance Endurance Lead](#).

Non-Selection Appeals Process

4.16 The publishing of the Final Selection Announcement on Athletics Ireland website will be **deemed to be the commencement of the 24-hour period to lodge non-Selection Appeals** in accord with this Selection Policy.

4.17 Any athlete who is not selected in accordance with this Selection Policy may appeal their non-selection to Athletics Ireland providing they:

4.17.1 Have submitted an NTF in accordance with timelines contained in this Selection Policy and;

4.17.2 Submit their non-selection appeal via online Notice of Appeals Form ([Notice of Appeal form is here](#)) within 24 hours of the selection decision published on the Athletics Ireland website (i.e. the Selection Announcement). The Notice of Appeal Form is submitted to the Chair of the Appeals Panel and the CEO of Athletics Ireland

4.18 The Grounds upon which a Selection decision may be appealed are limited to the following:

4.18.1 There has been an alleged failure by Selection Panel to follow or apply the relevant Selection Procedure and/or criteria set out in the Selection Policy, and/or

4.18.2 The decision for selection for the championship has been reached on the basis of an error of fact.

5. GENERAL INFORMATION:

5.1 The criteria may be amended at any time by the Directors of Athletics Ireland, if Athletics Ireland is of the opinion that such amendment is necessary in the best interests of Athletics Ireland or as a result of any change in participation rules and/or guidelines. Any amendment to the criteria will be published on the Athletics Ireland website.

6. GUIDELINE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS:

When considering additional discretionary selections in the U20 (clause 4.5.), U23 (clause 4.6) and Senior Categories (clause 4.7) athletes will be expected to have achieved Personal Best performances in one or more events as per the following table. Comparable performances in other events may also be considered. These are guideline standards only, intended to inform athletes and coaches of the level of performance expected for additional discretionary selections, and to inform the decision-making process for Selectors when gauging an athlete's capacity to contribute to a successful team performance.

Female Standards					Male Standards			
1500m	3000m	5000m	10,000m		1500m	3000m	5000m	10,000m
4:30.00	9:40.00	16:50.00		U20	3:52.00	8:22.00	14:35.00	
4:27.00	9:35.00	16:35.00		U23	3:48.00	8:07.00	14:10.00	
4:15.00	9:05.00	15:40.00	32:40.00	Senior	3:40.00	7:50.00	13:35.0	28:20.00
Mixed Relay								
Aggregate 2026 1500m Season's Best of 15:30.00 for best available 2 males and 2 females								