

Youth Racing Communique 14/01

Information for parents & sailors regarding the reasons for changes to age and process for selection for 2015/16 ISAF Youth Worlds and Eurosaf Europeans

Following discussions at the November 2013 and February 2014 Youth Steering Group (YSG) meetings the YSG made the following decision.

ISAF Youth World and EUROSAF European Youth Sailing Championships 2015 and 2016

The group have received some feedback regarding the age limits for the 2015 and 2016 ISAF and EUROSAF teams.

It is agreed the rationale by which YSG arrived at the decision should be recorded and minuted, to be shared as appropriate, so classes can be reassured all relevant factors were considered. It is agreed a policy should be written for future southern and northern hemisphere ISAF Youth Sailing World Championships to ensure continuity.

YSG wish to reaffirm the policy decision regarding age limits for British Sailing Team representatives to allow sailors born between September and December (18 and under in this case) (in line with the academic year) to compete in Southern Hemisphere ISAF Youth Sailing World Championships, where the age limit is under 18 in year of competition.

This allows sailors or teams in the same academic year to compete together.

*ISAF Youth Sailing World Championships – U18 on the 31st December or 18 years of age **and born between 1st September and 31st December inclusive**, in the year of competition.*

EUROSAF European Youth Sailing Championships – under 19 on 31 December in year of competition - This is a change from previous years.

Whilst the policy that supports this decision is in the process of being drafted this note gives some background and explains the reasons for this change.

The factors affecting the change are:

1. The venues selected for 2015 & 2016 ISAF Youth Championships and the effect on competition dates
2. The challenges around giving sailors the best opportunities to progress after the Youth programme
3. The importance and quality of the Eurosaf European Championships to a sailor's development and its role in their development

The venues selected for 2015 & 2016 ISAF Youth Championships and the effect on competition dates

Whilst Malaysia & Oman are not Southern hemisphere venues their location and climate mean that the dates for these events will fall to what we would normally consider a southern hemisphere calendar. Their competition season will naturally fall in our winter with racing for 2015 taking place in Dec 15 to Jan 16. This is 18 months on from the 2014 event. The 2016 event dates have yet to be finalised but we expect them to run to the same period but 12 months on Dec 16 to Jan 17. This is a significant calendar offset to a traditional northern hemisphere calendar and the dates for the Eurosaf Europeans.

The challenges around giving sailors the best opportunities to progress after the Youth programme

Because of the lateness of the events relative to a normal northern hemisphere calendar the event dates fall into a period when sailors reaching the upper end of the age band would be entering Higher Education. Term dates would start in the September with the major competition not being until the December, this has the potential to cause disruption to the sailor's preparation for two significant events in their lives with the potential to compromise both. This could also impact their progression into the next phase of their sailing career and disrupt their progress into the podium programmes.

The importance and quality of the Eurosaf European Championships to a sailor's development and its role in their development

Since the Eurosaf European Championships introduction it has grown progressively in quality and prestige and it can fulfil an equivalent role in a sailor's progression to that of the ISAF World Championships. In fact in some respects it is a more suitable event for a sailor's development towards the Podium programme than the more traditional route of ISAF Worlds. The evidence suggests that whilst performance at ISAF Worlds is an indicator of future success it is only one of many indicators and the current overemphasis on one event is impacting negatively on sailor progression and development.

The RYA now regards both events as having an equal priority in terms of developing sailors for the Olympic programme.

In taking these factors into account the YSG concluded that the best course of action was to lower the selection age for the ISAF Worlds such that sailors selected to compete would not be progressing to Higher education at the same time and therefore not being asked to compromise either their performance or future life choices.

And to balance this out to give an equivalent opportunity to those that are now too old for ISAF selection the opportunity to perform at Eurosaf Europeans an event that has matured sufficiently to be worthy of this role. This will allow them the opportunity to perform in the summer and then progress in their life choices with no compromise.

The YSG and the RYA appreciate that this is a significant change to the traditional programme but trust that all appreciate is has been made to give all the best opportunities without asking anybody to make difficult compromises that could impact their futures.

The selection process itself with draft dates and venue will follow ahead of the policy, along with a number of case studies to help bring the change to life.