

Leuven, 21 May 2026

Statement about World Climbing Europe Youth Series Brussels 2026

World Climbing Europe regrets that the Europe Youth Series event planned for 30–31 May 2026 in Brussels will not take place, particularly given the impact on the young athletes who had prepared for it. As a continental sports organisation, our primary responsibility is to organise competitions that provide high-quality sporting opportunities for athletes across Europe, ensuring strong standards in terms of organisation, fairness, and both physical and psychological safety.

World Climbing Europe is fully aware that the current international context is marked by serious conflicts that generate strong emotions and concerns across our community. We recognise that these realities can create difficult and sensitive circumstances for athletes, organisers, volunteers and officials.

In this context, the operational concerns raised, including staffing, public order and security, are important and must always be addressed responsibly. Over the past few days, World Climbing Europe, together with World Climbing and other stakeholders, explored possible solutions to allow the event to proceed within the established framework. Despite these extensive efforts, no agreement could be reached with the local organising entity to ensure the organisation of the event in compliance with the applicable rules.

This outcome is deeply regrettable. It affects not only the athletes, but also coaches, teams and the broader climbing community. In this situation, there are no winners.

At the same time, World Climbing Europe acknowledges that stakeholders may take decisions based on their own responsibilities and perspectives, even when these do not align with the common interest or contribute to de-escalation.

However, several fundamental principles must be reaffirmed.

The interests of athletes must remain central. Participation in international competitions must be governed by rules that apply equally to all. It is not acceptable for athletes from one country to be subject to different participation conditions, including restrictions on representation or official team identity, unless such measures result from decisions taken through established governance processes.

The framework governing participation and representation is defined collectively and was known when the event was allocated and the season calendar confirmed. While such frameworks may evolve, these evolutions must be decided through formal governance processes and applied consistently across competitions.

Allowing participation conditions to be determined unilaterally at the level of individual event organisers based on geopolitical considerations would create an unsustainable precedent and risk undermining the fairness, consistency and governability of international sport.

World Climbing Europe therefore regrets that a solution could not be found within this framework and that this has resulted in the cancellation of the event.

World Climbing Europe does not align with or endorse the positions expressed by individual stakeholders and remains committed to a principled and consistent governance approach. We will continue to engage in dialogue with all stakeholders to support mutual understanding and coherent solutions for the future.



Tijl Smits
President
World Climbing Europe