



2015 UEFA European Under-21 Championship

Final tournament draw press kit

Prague, 6 November 2014

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Draw preview

The draw for the 2015 UEFA European Under-21 Championship finals, streamed live on UEFA.com, will take place today at 18.00CET at the Clarion Congress Hotel in Prague.

The ceremony will be hosted by presenters Lucie Výborná and Libor Bouček, while former Czech international and tournament ambassador Pavel Nedvěd will assist with the draw.

The finals – the Czech Republic's first at U21 level – will be played from 17 to 30 June 2015, with matches to be held in Prague, Olomouc and Uherske Hradiste.

The eight teams will be split into two groups of four, using the following seeding process.

- The two top-seeded nations are the host association's team, Czech Republic (position A1) and the highest-ranked team in the UEFA U21 coefficient ranking, England (position B1).
- The teams ranked second (Italy) and third (Germany) in the UEFA U21 coefficient ranking are seeded and will be drawn into positions A2 and B2.
- The remaining four teams (Portugal, Denmark, Sweden and Serbia) are not seeded and will be drawn into positions A3, B3, A4 and B4.

Match schedule

The match schedule will be communicated after the final tournament draw is complete.

Matches will be played on the following dates:

- Matchday 1 17/18 June
- Matchday 2 20/21 June
- Matchday 3 23/24 June
- Semi-finals 27 June
- Final 30 June

Please note that the four semi-finalists will make up Europe's entrants to the 2016 Olympic Games football tournament; if England (who do not enter the Olympics) progress from the group stage, there will be a play-off between the two teams who finish third in their groups.

FAČR president and tournament ambassadors

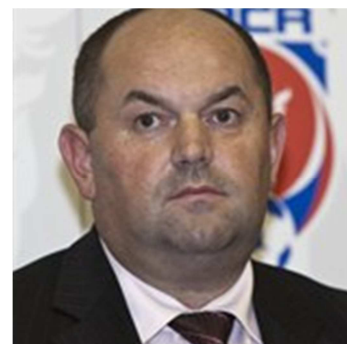
The president – Miroslav Pelta

Date of birth: 27 November 1964

Association president since: 2011

- A former goalkeeper whose career was ended early by injury, Miroslav Pelta has had a long relationship with football in Jablonec, northern Bohemia. He was elected president of FK Jablonec at the age of 27 and is now the club's owner as well as a member of the municipal council.

- He left the Jablonec football scene for six years to serve as general manager of AC Sparta Praha from 1999 till 2005, and Pelta was also a Football Association of the Czech Republic (FAČR) executive committee member during that period, and director of the FAČR marketing company. He also worked on the UEFA Club Competitions Committee from 2000 to 2002.



- "I will begin negotiations with both the private and state sectors to secure enough money for the whole of [Czech] football," said Pelta when he was elected FAČR president in November 2011, succeeding Ivan Hašek. Re-election for a four-year term followed in June 2013.

The ambassador – Pavel Nedvěd

Date of birth: 30 August 1972

Clubs: AC Dukla Praha, AC Sparta Praha, SS Lazio, Juventus

UEFA honours:

UEFA European Championship: runner-up 1996

UEFA Champions League: runner-up 2003

UEFA Cup Winners' Cup: winner 1999

UEFA Cup: runner-up 1998

UEFA Super Cup: winner 1999

UEFA Club Midfielder of the Year:

winner 2003

UEFA.com users' Team of the Year:

selected 2003, 2004, 2005



- Born in the western Czech town of Cheb, close to the border with Germany, Nedvěd started his career with Dukla Praha before making his name as a versatile two-footed midfielder with Sparta.

- Impressed a global audience at EURO '96 in England, scoring his first international goal in a 2-1 win against Italy at Anfield and inspiring the Czech Republic to the final, where they lost to Oliver Bierhoff's golden goal for Germany.

- Left Sparta for Lazio that summer and became a big hit in Italy. He won the domestic cup and helped the Rome club to the UEFA Cup final in his second season, lifted the last UEFA Cup

Winners' Cup (scoring the decisive goal in the final against RCD Mallorca) in his third campaign and claimed a Serie A/Coppa Italia double in his fourth.

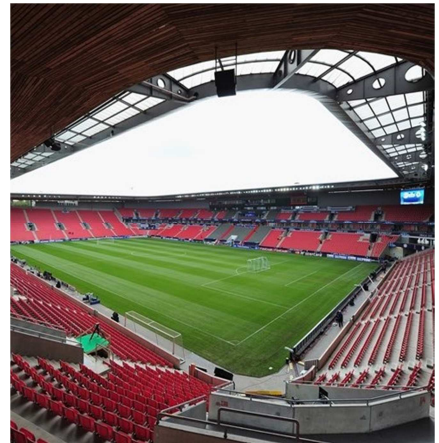
- Transferred to Juventus in 2001, he would stay with the Turin outfit for the remainder of his career, hanging up his boots after eight seasons in which he landed two Serie A titles and helped the Old Lady to the 2003 UEFA Champions League final, only to be suspended for the decider against AC Milan. Despite his absence from the Old Trafford showpiece he received the Ballon d'Or award at the end of the year.
- Participated in his third UEFA European Championship in 2004, gracing the tournament in Portugal with several vintage displays as his side got to the semi-finals. He initially announced his national team retirement that summer but returned to fulfil a dream by appearing at the 2006 FIFA World Cup, and soon after departed the scene with 91 caps and 18 goals.
- Now a Juventus director, Nedved, who likes to run marathons in Prague, was voted by the public in 2013 as the best Czech league player of the last 20 years.

Venue guides

Stadion Eden, Prague

Capacity: 20,800

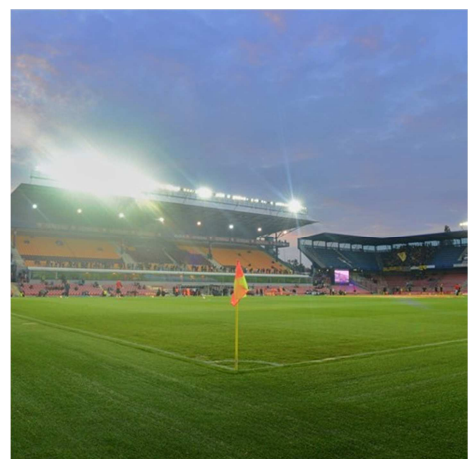
- Opened in May 2008 on the site of the old ground of the same name, the venue is the newest football arena in the Czech Republic.
- On 30 August 2013, Stadion Eden hosted the UEFA Super Cup, FC Bayern München defeating Chelsea FC 5-4 on penalties following a 2-2 draw over 120 minutes. FC Viktoria Plzeň played here during their maiden UEFA Champions League group stage campaign, in 2011/12.
- Home to SK Slavia Praha, the stadium is renowned for the atmosphere generated by fans who sit close to the pitch. It was one of Slavia's most famous sons, Vladimír Šmicer, who cut the ribbon to officially launch the €40m venue.
- A Slavia XI took on English amateur team Oxford University AFC, their first foreign opponents 112 years ago, in the first match at the new ground, winning 5-0. Three weeks later the Czech Republic beat Lithuania 2-0 in a friendly there and the stadium has since shared national team hosting duties with AC Sparta Praha's Stadion Letná.



Stadion Letná, Prague

Capacity: 19,784

- Opened in 1917, the arena underwent major renovation work in 1994 to transform it into an all-seat venue and to remove the running track that separated the pitch from the stands.
- Home to AC Sparta Praha, Stadion Letná is a regular venue for the Czech national side's home matches, most recently the UEFA EURO 2016 qualifier against the Netherlands in September 2014.



The city of Prague has a population of 1.26 million and is famous for its historical centre, Prague Castle, Charles Bridge and medieval architecture. Czech cuisine and beer are popular with tourists.

Andrův Stadion, Olomouc

Capacity: 12,566

- Opened in 1940, the stadium underwent a major reconstruction in 2010. It has hosted nine matches involving the senior Czech national side.

- Andrův Stadion is named after Josef Ander, a local businessman and philanthropist who also sponsored football in Olomouc.

- The arena is home to SK Sigma Olomouc, who were relegated to the Czech second tier at the end of the 2013/14 season after 30 years in the top flight.

- Olomouc has a population of around 101,000 and is famous for its university and historical centre. Known for its many cultural events and festivals, Olomouc is the largest city in Moravia.



Městský fotbalový stadion Miroslava Valenty, Uherske Hradiste

Capacity: 8,000

- Opened in 2003 on the site of a stadium that had been used for football since the 1920s.

- Under-21 finals ambassador Pavel Nedvěd earned his 91st and final cap for the Czech Republic in a friendly here against Serbia in August 2006.

- Home to 1. FC Slovácko, the arena is known for its loud atmosphere and tight stands that surround the pitch.

- The historical town of Uherske Hradiste has a population of around 25,300 and was founded in 1257. It is a centre of the Slovácko region famous for its folklore, music, wine and historical sights.



Team profiles

Czech Republic

Runners-up in 2000, winners in 2002 and bronze medallists nine years later, the Czech Republic have high hopes for the 2015 finals.

Jakub Dovalil led Lvíčata (lion cubs) to a fourth-place finish in Denmark two tournaments ago and he will be in charge again as the Czech Republic prepare for the most prestigious sporting competition ever organised in the country.

As hosts, the Czechs have been limited to friendlies in the build-up to the finals. What is more, several of their key players – defender Pavel Kadeřábek, midfielder Ladislav Krejčí, and forwards Matěj Vydra and Václav Kadlec – have turned out for the seniors with differing degrees of regularity, meaning Dovalil has had to look elsewhere to mould a team capable of realising his aim of a minimum last-four place next June.

Likely to join Krejčí et al in the squad are Chelsea FC's on-loan 1. FC Köln defender Tomáš Kalas, rearguard colleague Jakub Brabec and midfielder Tomáš Přikryl. The three players were members of the side that came second at the 2011 UEFA European Under-19 Championship in Romania, where Přikryl was on target three times.

Dovalil, at the helm since November 2008, followed up the Czechs' fourth spot in 2011 by guiding them to the play-offs for the 2013 finals, losing 4-2 on aggregate to Russia. The 2-0 first-leg defeat in that tie was the team's first reverse in 19 qualifying matches.

"We cannot have modest targets – our aim is to qualify from our group," said Dovalil. "Then we would have a medal and anything could happen."



Coach: Jakub Dovalil
Nationality: Czech
Date of birth: 8 February 1974

Final tournament record

2011: semi-finals

2002: winners

2000: runners-up

1996: quarter-finals

All-time competitive record

Czech Republic: P151 W85 D29 L37

As part of Czechoslovakia: P28 W17 D4 L7

Friendly results

Date	Result	Czech Republic scorer(s)
14/11/2012	Czech Republic 1-1 Sweden	Jiří Mareš
22/03/2013	Czech Republic 1-1 Ukraine	Václav Kadlec
26/03/2013	Czech Republic 0-0 Turkey	
24/04/2013	Czech Republic 1-0 Slovakia	Tomáš Kunc
04/06/2013	Czech Republic 0-3 Austria	
05/06/2013	Slovenia 0-1 Czech Republic	Jakub Plšek
14/08/2013	Czech Republic 1-0 Netherlands	Ondřej Petrák
05/11/2013	Cyprus 0-3 Czech Republic	Michael Krmenčík, Jaromír Zmrhal, Lukáš Stratil
19/11/2013	England C 2-2 Czech Republic	Michael Krmenčík, Lukáš Stratil
05/03/2014	Czech Republic 1-2 Norway U23	Matěj Hanousek
15/04/2014	Slovakia 3-1 Czech Republic	Michal Trávník
03/06/2014	Czech Republic 0-1 Austria	
09/10/2014	Ukraine 1-0 Czech Republic	
14/10/2014	Czech Republic 0-1 Italy Lega Pro	

Denmark

Hosts in 2011, Denmark steamrollered their way through qualifying round Group 2 before meeting obdurate opposition in the play-offs.

Jess Thorup's team accrued 26 points out of a possible 30, scoring 37 goals along the way – six more than any other side. The only nation to offer any semblance of resistance was Slovenia, who restricted Denmark to back-to-back 2-2 draws in autumn 2013.

With the Danes having averaged almost four goals a game in a section also containing Russia, Bulgaria, Estonia and Andorra, it was surprising they took until the 180th minute of the play-off tie against Iceland to make the breakthrough. Though their well-organised opponents quickly equalised from the spot, it was too little, too late – Denmark had qualified on away goals.

Nobody was ever-present throughout the campaign, but three players stood out: centre-back Jannik Vestergaard, midfielder Nicolaj Thomsen and, until he was promoted to the seniors, FC Bayern München midfielder Pierre Højbjerg.

After the play-off triumph in Reykjavik, left-back Jonas Knudsen, who provided the assist for Thomsen to score the qualification-clinching goal, said: "I can't describe the feeling. It is fantastic and the biggest thing you can achieve as an international youth player. I don't understand why we had to make it this exciting and only decide it at the very end, but we deserved to be in the final tournament."



Coach: Jess Thorup
Nationality: Danish
Date of birth: 21 February 1970

Final tournament record

2011: group stage

2006: group stage

1992: semi-finals

1986: quarter-finals

1978: quarter-finals

All-time competitive record

P158 W76 D35 L47

2015 qualifying (including play-off)

P12 W8 D4 L0 F38 A10

Top scorer: Lasse Christensen (5)

Ever present: none

Qualification campaign

Group 2

Pos.	Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	For	Against	Points
1	Denmark	10	8	2	0	37	9	26
2	Russia	10	7	1	2	22	12	22
3	Slovenia	10	5	2	3	29	11	17
4	Bulgaria	10	2	3	5	18	26	9
5	Estonia	10	2	3	5	9	23	9
6	Andorra	10	0	1	9	1	35	1

Results

Date	Result	Denmark scorer(s)	Venue
07/06/2013	Estonia 0-1 Denmark	Jradi	Tallinn
06/09/2013	Denmark 6-0 Andorra	Remmer (2), Zohore (2), Brock-Madsen, L. Andersen	Aalborg
10/09/2013	Slovenia 2-2 Denmark	Brock-Madsen, L. Christensen	Ajdovscina
11/10/2013	Denmark 2-2 Slovenia	Højbjerg (2)	Aalborg
15/10/2013	Russia 0-2 Denmark	Jønsson, Brock-Madsen	Khimki
15/11/2013	Bulgaria 2-3 Denmark	Poulsen (2), Vestergaard	Stara Zagora
19/11/2013	Andorra 0-2 Denmark	Zohore, Poulsen	Andorra la Vella
05/03/2014	Denmark 8-0 Estonia	Højbjerg (2), Cornelius, Poulsen, Thomsen (2), L. Christensen (2)	Farum
03/09/2014	Denmark 4-2 Russia	L. Christensen (2), Vestergaard, A. Christensen	Aalborg
09/09/2014	Denmark 7-1 Bulgaria	L. Andersen (2), Durmisi, Vestergaard, Berggreen, Bech, Zohore	Aalborg
10/10/2014	Denmark 0-0 Iceland*		Aalborg
14/10/2014	Iceland 1-1 Denmark *	Thomsen	Reykjavik

*Play-off for final tournament

England

Gareth Southgate, having succeeded former international team-mate Stuart Pearce in August 2013, guided England to their fifth consecutive Under-21 finals.

While they won all but one of their 12 matches, the Young Lions started the qualification campaign unspectacularly. Southgate's side edged Moldova 1-0 thanks to a goal from Saido Berahino and then drew 1-1 in Finland four days later, coming from behind to secure a point courtesy of another strike from the West Bromwich Albion FC forward. Eight consecutive victories then meant England topped Group 1 by 12 points and entered the play-offs – where Croatia were beaten 2-1 home and away – flush with confidence.

Goalkeeper Jack Butland, midfielder James Ward-Prowse, winger Nathan Redmond and Berahino formed the spine of a team that scored 35 goals and conceded only four. Berahino contributed ten of them in as many appearances. He was ably supported by Tottenham Hotspur FC's Harry Kane, whose six goals in eight outings included the equaliser in the play-off first leg in Wolverhampton.

"There are so many players who have played a part in getting us to the finals and every challenge that we've put in front of them they've risen to," said Southgate, whose predecessor led England to the semi-finals and final before overseeing a group stage exit at each of the last two tournaments. "I'm very proud of the group of players and the group of staff who now have the finals to look forward to next summer."



Coach: Gareth Southgate
Nationality: English
Date of birth: 3 September 1970

Final tournament record

2013: group stage

2011: group stage

2009: runners-up

2007: semi-finals

2002: group stage

2000: group stage

1988: semi-finals

1986: semi-finals

1984: winners

1982: winners

1980: semi-finals

1978: semi-finals

All-time competitive record

P204 W122 D46 L36

2015 qualifying (including play-off)

P12 W11 D1 L0 F35 A4

Top scorer: Saido Berahino (10)

Ever present: none

Qualification campaign

Group 1

Pos.	Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	For	Against	Points
1	England	10	9	1	0	31	2	28
2	Finland	10	4	4	2	17	10	16
3	Moldova	10	5	1	4	12	6	16
4	Wales	10	3	3	4	12	13	12
5	Lithuania	10	2	2	6	6	19	8
6	San Marino	10	1	1	8	2	30	4

Results

Date	Result	England scorer(s)	Venue
05/09/2013	England 1-0 Moldova	Berahino	Reading
09/09/2013	Finland 1-1 England	Berahino	Tampere
10/10/2013	San Marino 0-4 England	Keane, H. Kane (3)	Serravalle
15/10/2013	England 5-0 Lithuania	Morrison (2), Ward-Prowse, Berahino (2)	Ipswich
14/11/2013	England 3-0 Finland	Keane, Berahino (2)	Milton Keynes
19/11/2013	England 9-0 San Marino	Keane, Sterling (2), Ings (2), Ward-Prowse, Ince, Jenkinson, Hughes	Shrewsbury
05/03/2014	England 1-0 Wales	Redmond	Derby
19/05/2014	Wales 1-3 England	Redmond (2), Berahino	Swansea
05/09/2014	Lithuania 0-1 England	H. Kane	Kaunas
09/09/2014	Moldova 0-3 England	Berahino (2), H. Kane	Tiraspol
10/10/2014	England 2-1 Croatia*	H. Kane, Berahino	Wolverhampton
14/10/2014	Croatia 1-2 England *	Moore, Hughes	Vinkovci

*Play-off for final tournament

Germany

Having guided Germany to their first and so far only UEFA European Under-21 Championship title in 2009, Horst Hrubesch is back in charge and aiming to repeat that success. Six of the side that triumphed in Malmö five years ago were part of Germany's FIFA World Cup-winning squad in Brazil, and for Hrubesch, the ambition is still the same. "It is my task to prepare the players in a way that gets them ready to play for Joachim Löw," he said.

That policy is bearing fruit, with Marc-André ter Stegen, Kevin Volland, Max Meyer and Christian Günter having already been capped at senior level. Volland, the U21 captain, was named in Löw's preliminary squad for the World Cup and caught the eye during qualifying for the Czech Republic with six goals in as many games, including one in each leg of the 5-0 play-off victory over Ukraine. Philipp and Jonas Hofmann, Moritz Leitner and Leonardo Bittencourt are other key players, with much also expected of FC Schalke 04 playmaker Meyer and FC Barcelona keeper Ter Stegen in particular.

Certainly, Germany had no trouble securing their place in next summer's showpiece. They finished top of qualifying Group 6 with a match to spare, eight points clear of Romania – whom they thrashed 8-0 in Magdeburg in their final group game. They then saw off Ukraine in the play-offs without conceding. In all, they scored 30 times and let in just five, Philipp Hofmann leading the way with seven goals in ten outings. Germany were eliminated at the group phase in Israel 2013 – Hrubesch expects more in 2015. "Everyone who knows me knows I am not going to the finals to just be there: this team has the ability to win the title," he said.



Coach: Horst Hrubesch
Nationality: German
Date of birth: 17 April 1951

Final tournament record

2013: group stage
2009: winners
2006: group stage
2004: group stage
1998: quarter-finals
1996: quarter-finals
1992: quarter-finals
1990: quarter-finals
1982: runners-up

All-time competitive record

P167 W103 D31 L33

2015 qualifying (including play-off)

P10 W8 D2 L0 F30 A5

Top scorer: Philipp Hofmann (7)

Ever present: Philipp Hofmann

Qualification campaign

Group 6

Pos.	Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	For	Against	Points
1	Germany	8	6	2	0	25	5	20
2	Romania	8	3	3	2	14	19	12
3	Montenegro	8	3	2	3	12	11	11
4	Republic of Ireland	8	2	2	4	10	12	8
5	Faroe Islands	8	1	1	6	9	23	4

Results

Date	Result	Germany scorer(s)	Venue
06/09/2013	Faroe Islands 0-3 Germany	Leitner, J. Hofmann, Bittencourt	Torshavn
09/09/2013	Republic of Ireland 0-4 Germany	Leitner, Volland, P. Hofmann	Sligo
11/10/2013	Germany 2-0 Montenegro	P. Hofmann, Volland	Wiesbaden
15/10/2013	Germany 3-2 Faroe Islands	Knoche, Volland, Younes	Kassel
15/11/2013	Montenegro 1-1 Germany	P. Hofmann	Podgorica
19/11/2013	Romania 2-2 Germany	P. Hofmann, Rüdiger	Giurgiu
05/09/2014	Germany 2-0 Republic of Ireland	P. Hofmann, J. Hofmann	Halle
05/09/2014	Germany 8-0 Romania	Malli, P. Hofmann, Younes, J. Hofmann (2), Schulz, Da Costa, Stark	Magdeburg
10/10/2014	Ukraine 0-3 Germany *	P. Hofmann, Volland, J. Hofmann	Cherkassy
14/10/2014	Germany 2-0 Ukraine*	Volland, Bittencourt	Essen

*Play-off for final tournament

Italy

Five-time champions Italy recovered from a troubled start to their qualifying campaign to reach the Czech Republic. Defeated 3-1 at home by Belgium in their opening Group 9 match, Italy got back on track in Genk the following month with a 1-0 victory in the reverse fixture, only to further complicate matters by losing by the same scoreline in Serbia. Luigi Di Biagio's side even looked to be on the way out in their penultimate game against the Serbs after falling 2-0 behind within 13 minutes in Pescara, but a dramatic comeback spearheaded by two goals from Andrea Belotti secured a 3-2 success and top spot in the section.

US Città di Palermo striker Belotti also scored in both legs of the play-off against Slovakia as the Azzurrini prevailed 4-2 on aggregate. He forms part of a dangerous three-pronged attack – 'Il Tridente 3B' – alongside Domenico Berardi and Federico Bernardeschi. Stefano Sturaro and Lorenzo Crisetig, meanwhile, anchor the midfield and both have made good progress with their Serie A sides Genoa CFC and Cagliari Calcio this season. Goalkeeper Francesco Bardi and defenders Cristiano Biraghi (both AC Chievo Verona) and Davide Zappacosta (Atalanta BC) provide further Serie A experience at the back.

The Azzurrini got to the final in Israel in 2013 only to be overpowered by Spain 4-2 in Jerusalem. Di Biagio replaced Devis Mangia as coach that summer and the former AS Roma and FC Internazionale Milano midfielder is pleased with his team's evolution so far. "We honestly thought it was going to be very difficult to qualify from our group considering how strong our opponents were," he said. "We have to work hard to keep improving, but there is plenty of enthusiasm so we can be positive."



Final tournament record

2013: runners-up
2009: semi-finals
2007: group stage
2006: group stage
2004: winners
2002: semi-finals
2000: winners
1996: winners
1994: winners
1992: winners
1990: semi-finals
1988: quarter-finals
1986: runners-up
1984: semi-finals
1982: quarter-finals
1980: quarter-finals
1978: quarter-finals

All-time competitive record

P217 W137 D46 L34

2015 qualifying (including play-off)

P10 W7 D1 L2 F23 A9

Top scorer: Andrea Belotti (6)

Ever present: Francesco Bardi, Christian Battocchio

Qualification campaign

Group 9

Pos.	Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	For	Against	Points
1	Italy	8	6	0	2	19	7	18
2	Serbia	8	5	1	2	18	10	16
3	Belgium	8	5	1	2	15	7	16
4	Cyprus	8	2	0	6	7	21	6
5	Northern Ireland	8	1	0	7	3	17	3

Results

Date	Result	Italy scorer(s)	Venue
05/09/2013	Italy 1-3 Belgium	Battocchio	Rieti
09/09/2013	Cyprus 0-2 Italy	Fedato, Improta	Nicosia
14/10/2013	Belgium 0-1 Italy	Battocchio	Genk
14/11/2013	Italy 3-0 Northern Ireland	Viviani, Rozzi, Belotti	Reggio Emilia
19/11/2013	Serbia 1-0 Italy		Gornji Milanovac
05/03/2014	Northern Ireland 0-2 Italy	Rugani, Trotta	Lurgan
05/09/2014	Italy 3-2 Serbia	Belotti (2), Berardi	Pescara
09/09/2014	Italy 7-1 Cyprus	Bernardeschi, A. Panayiotou (og), Sturaro, Belotti, Dezi, Longo, Rugani	Castel Di Sangrio
10/10/2014	Slovakia 1-1 Italy *	Belotti	Zlate Moravce
14/10/2014	Italy 3-1 Slovakia*	Bernardeschi, Belotti, Longo	Reggio Emilia

*Play-off for final tournament

Portugal

Portugal are the only team to qualify with a perfect record, winning all ten of their games to reach the final tournament for the first time since 2007, when they finished third. It will be their seventh finals, with their best performance coming in 1994 when a side featuring Luís Figo and Rui Costa were runners-up to Italy.

The Portuguese kicked off with an emphatic 5-1 home victory over Norway and never looked back, topping Group 8 without dropping a point, scoring 22 goals and shipping just six in the process. Their 4-3 success in Israel proved a harbinger of things to come in the play-offs, where they advanced 7-4 on aggregate against the Netherlands after a thrilling 5-4 second-leg win in Pacos de Ferreira.

FC Porto forward Ricardo scored twice in that match, taking his team-leading qualifying tally to five. Along with Sporting Clube de Portugal centre-back Paulo Oliveira, he was one of two players to figure in every game. In midfield, Bernardo Silva (who has played in the UEFA Champions League this season with AS Monaco FC on loan from SL Benfica) was another important attacking outlet with four goals and two assists, while William Carvalho and André Gomes have impressed sufficiently to join the seniors since the start of qualifying.

Coach Rui Jorge has been at the helm since 2010, and after missing out on a place in the finals in 2013, his side have made amends in style. "What we've done is amazing but totally deserved for these players, who will have the opportunity to play on a very important stage," he said. "We have a strong team but I wouldn't say we're favourites. Our first goal will be to get through the group stage and earn a spot at the Olympics in Brazil."



Coach: Rui Jorge
Nationality: Portuguese
Date of birth: 27 March 1973

Final tournament record

2007: semi-finals

2006: group stage

2004: semi-finals

2002: group stage

1996: quarter-finals

1994: runners-up

All-time competitive record

P164 W93 D29 L42

2015 qualifying (including play-off)

P10 W10 D0 L0 F29 A10

Top scorer: Ricardo (5)

Ever present: Paulo Oliveira, Ricardo

Qualification campaign

Group 8

Pos.	Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	For	Against	Points
1	Portugal	8	8	0	0	22	6	24
2	Israel	8	5	0	3	22	15	15
3	Norway	8	3	0	5	11	19	9
4	Azerbaijan	8	2	1	5	9	15	7
5	FYR Macedonia	8	1	1	6	4	13	4

Results

Date	Result	Portugal scorer(s)	Venue
05/09/2013	Portugal 5-1 Norway	Betinho, Ivan Cavaleiro, Sérgio Oliveira, William Carvalho, Ricardo	Barcelos
10/10/2013	Portugal 3-0 Israel	William Carvalho, Bruma, Twatha (og)	Marinha Grande
15/10/2013	Azerbaijan 0-2 Portugal	Rafa Silva, Ivan Cavaleiro	Baku
18/11/2013	Israel 3-4 Portugal	Ivan Cavaleiro, Ricardo, Bernardo Silva (2)	Petah Tikva
05/03/2014	Portugal 2-0 FYR Macedonia	Bernardo Silva, Ricardo Esgaio	Barcelos
23/05/2014	FYR Macedonia 0-1 Portugal	Tiago Ilori	Skopje
04/09/2014	Norway 1-2 Portugal	Carlos Mané, Ricardo	Drammen
09/09/2014	Portugal 7-1 Azerbaijan	Rafa Silva, Edgar Lé, Ricardo Esgaio	Rio Maior
09/10/2014	Netherlands 0-2 Portugal *	Sérgio Oliveira, Carlos Mané	Alkmaar
14/10/2014	Portugal 5-4 Netherlands*	Rúben Vezo, Rúben Neves, Ricardo (2), Bernardo Silva	Pacos de Ferreira

*Play-off for final tournament

Serbia

Serbia pulled off the biggest surprise in qualifying by knocking out holders Spain in the play-offs. After a goalless first leg, the 2011 and 2013 champions were beaten for the first time in 35 competitive matches, 2-1 in Cadiz, an indication of Serbia's potential. □ Coach Radovan Ćurčić declared it "mission impossible" when Serbia were drawn with Italy and Belgium in Group 9. But they took four points off Belgium, including a 3-0 away win, and three from Italy, to finish second behind the Azzurrini and advance as the fourth best runners-up. It would have been better still had they not relinquished a 2-0 lead to lose to Italy in their penultimate game.

Serbia's success is all the more impressive given the challenges Ćurčić has faced. Goalkeeper Predrag Rajković, defender Matija Nastasić, midfielders Miloš Jojić and Filip Djuričić, and forwards Aleksandar Mitrović and Lazar Marković have graduated to the senior side, while captain Marko Petković is among four key players whose appearances were restricted by injury.

That all points to the current strength of Serbian youth football, and Ćurčić has drawn on members of the 2013 UEFA European Under-19 Championship winning team, notably defender Miloš Veljković, to bolster his squad. It also emphasises the character of his group. "These players have shown what makes football such a great sport: team spirit, togetherness and, crucially, the desire to give 100 per cent for our country," Ćurčić said.

It is the first time since 2009 that Serbia have reached the final tournament, yet they have a history of success, winning the first edition as part of Yugoslavia in 1978 and getting to three subsequent finals: with Yugoslavia in 1990, as Serbia and Montenegro in 2004 and as Serbia in 2007. Ćurčić is delighted to see his side back at the top table. "Qualification means a lot for everybody in Serbian football," he said.



Coach: Radovan Ćurčić
Nationality: Serbian
Date of birth: 10 January 1971

Final tournament record

2009: group stage

2007: runners-up

2006: semi-finals

2004: runners-up

1990: runners-up (as Yugoslavia)

1984: semi-finals (as Yugoslavia)

1980: semi-finals (as Yugoslavia)

1978: winners (as Yugoslavia)

All-time competitive record

P166 W88 D33 L45

2015 qualifying (including play-off)

P10 W6 D2 L2 F20 A11

Top scorer: Aleksandar Mitrović (4)

Ever present: none

Qualification campaign

Group 9

Pos.	Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	For	Against	Points
1	Italy	8	6	0	2	19	7	18
2	Serbia	8	5	1	2	18	10	16
3	Belgium	8	5	1	2	15	7	16
4	Cyprus	8	2	0	6	7	21	6
5	Northern Ireland	8	1	0	7	3	17	3

Results

Date	Result	Serbia scorer(s)	Venue
05/09/2013	Serbia 2-1 Cyprus	Milunović (2)	Gornji Milanovac
11/10/2013	Cyprus 2-1 Serbia	Mitrović	Achnas
15/10/2013	Serbia 3-1 Northern Ireland	Morgan (og), Milunović, Vitas	Gornji Milanovac
15/11/2013	Serbia 2-2 Belgium	Djurdjević, Mitrović	Gornji Milanovac
19/11/2013	Serbia 1-0 Italy	Caušić	Gornji Milanovac
05/03/2014	Belgium 0-3 Serbia	Mitrović (2), Brašanac	Louvain
04/09/2014	Italy 3-2 Serbia	Pešić (2)	Pescara
09/09/2014	Northern Ireland 1-4 Serbia	Pešić, Srnić, Kostić	Portadown
10/10/2014	Serbia 0-0 Spain*		Jagodina
14/10/2014	Spain 1-2 Serbia *	Saúl Níguez (og), Kostić	Cadiz

*Play-off for final tournament

Sweden

After reaching the last four on their previous two final tournament appearances, Sweden coach Håkan Ericson is aiming for the same again at least in the Czech Republic next summer. "One of our goals is to grab one of the four Olympic berths," he said. "We can't go with any other ambition."

Sweden were beaten in a semi-final shoot-out by Serbia and Montenegro in 2004 before losing to Portugal in extra time in the third-place play-off. There was more heartache in 2009 when, as hosts, they battled back from 3-0 down in their semi against England, only to bow out on penalties.

They have already had reason to celebrate this time after recovering from a 2-0 first-leg defeat by France in the play-offs to advance 4-3 on aggregate. Indeed, the French were on the verge of qualifying on the away-goals rule when Layvin Kurzawa scored with three minutes to play in Halmstad, but Oscar Lewicki replied almost instantly with his second of the night to seal a 4-1 win and a slender aggregate triumph.

There was no sense of the excitement to come after a slow start for Sweden in qualifying Group 7. Losses in Poland and Greece within the space of four days put their hopes in jeopardy, before they finally hit their stride with victories in their four remaining group matches. Progress, though, was in the balance until Oscar Hiljemark's 92nd-minute strike against Turkey in the concluding qualifier earned a 4-3 success and top spot in the section.

John Guidetti and Isaac Kiese Thelin were Sweden's leading marksmen with four goals each, while Lewicki featured in nine games, more than any other player. Goalkeeper Patrik Carlgren, defenders Filip Helander and Alexander Milošević – Sweden's captain – and midfielder Hiljemark were also influential.



Coach: Håkan Ericson
Nationality: Swedish
Date of birth: 29 May 1960

Final tournament record

2009: semi-finals

2004: semi-finals

1998: quarter-finals

1992: runners-up

1990: semi-finals

1986: quarter-finals

All-time competitive record

P168 W87 D34 L47

2015 qualifying (including play-off)

P10 W6 D1 L3 F24 A17

Top scorer: Isaac Kiese Thelin, John Guidetti (4)

Ever present: none

Qualification campaign

Group 7

Pos.	Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	For	Against	Points
1	Sweden	8	5	1	2	20	14	16
2	Greece	8	5	0	3	20	10	15
3	Poland	8	5	0	3	17	10	15
4	Turkey	8	4	1	3	16	11	13
5	Malta	8	0	0	8	2	30	0

Results

Date	Result	Sweden scorer(s)	Venue
06/09/2013	Sweden 3-1 Poland	Thern, Hrgota, Ishak	Malmo
10/09/2013	Turkey 2-2 Sweden	Hallberg, Gustafsson	Istanbul
12/10/2013	Poland 2-0 Sweden		Krakow
15/11/2013	Greece 5-1 Sweden	Ishak	Katerini
19/11/2013	Sweden 5-0 Malta	Guidetti (2), Claesson, Hrgota, Nyman	Malmo
05/03/2014	Malta 1-2 Sweden	Milošević, Guidetti	Ta' Qali
05/09/2014	Sweden 3-0 Greece	Guidetti, Kiese Thelin (2)	Halmstad
09/09/2014	Sweden 4-3 Turkey	Olsson (3), Hiljemark	Halmstad
10/10/2014	France 2-0 Sweden *		Le Mans
14/10/2014	Sweden 4-1 France*	Kiese Thelin (2), Lewicki (2)	Halmstad

* Play-off for final tournament

2015 UEFA European Under-21 Championship qualifying statistics

Most goals scored (average per game)

Denmark	37 (3.7)
England	31 (3.1)
Slovenia	29 (2.9)

Fewest goals conceded (average per game)

England	2 (0.2)
Germany, Croatia	5 (0.63)
Spain, Portugal, Netherlands	6 (0.75)
Moldova	6 (0.6)

Goal attempts (on and off target)

England	198
Denmark	184
Germany	178

Biggest win

England 9-0 San Marino	19/11/2013
Denmark 8-0 Estonia	05/03/2014
Germany 8-0 Romania	09/09/2014

Leading scorers

Saido Berahino (England)	10
Arkadiusz Milik (Poland)	9
Álvaro Morata (Spain)	8
Emil Atlason (Iceland)	8
Munas Dabbur (Israel)	8

Most assists

Florian Thauvin (France)	7
Nicolaj Thomsen (Denmark)	5

Most goals in a game

Álvaro Morata (Austria 2-6 Spain)	05/09/2013)
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Highest attendance

Spain v Bosnia and Herzegovina – 23,895	(La Condomina, Murcia, 10/10/2013)
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Youngest player

Jens Hofer (01/10/1997) – 16 years, 8 months, 4 days	(Liechtenstein v Ukraine, 04/06/2014)
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History

What is now the UEFA European Under-21 Championship has its roots in the late 1960s but there have been many stages in its evolution to the high-profile biennial tournament of today.

The continent's most exciting young players offer a tantalising glimpse into what the future of European football might hold. A curling free-kick from Andrea Pirlo in the 2000 final, a diving penalty save from Petr Čech to help the Czech Republic win the trophy two years after that; the stars of tomorrow did it here first. Italy have triumphed a record five occasions; in 2013 Spain secured their fourth victory.

The format has changed down the years, but the competition's *raison d'être* has remained the same: to provide a stepping stone from youth football up to the full international stage. The roll call of great players who have graduated from European football's élite finishing school is testament to its enduring success. Roberto Mancini, Zinédine Zidane, Rudi Völler, Davor Šuker, Luís Figo, Raúl González and Frank Lampard to name but a few have all played their part in making the UEFA European U21 Championship one of the highlights on the football calendar.

Today's prestigious eight-team final tournament enjoys worldwide acclaim, but it has evolved considerably since UEFA first put the idea to its member associations in January 1967. The concept then was for a 'Challenge Cup for national representative teams aged under-23'. Seventeen associations signed up, from which Bulgaria and East Germany were drawn to play the first match. It was held in Stara Zagora on 7 June 1967, with Bulgaria winning 3-2 to become the first champions. Like in boxing, they were simply required to defend their title against a series of challengers and Bulgaria then Yugoslavia dominated the early years. The foundations for today's competition had been laid.

It was not until 1976 that the age limit was changed to U21, when UEFA decided the gap between U18 and U23 levels was too great. By now the Challenge Cup format had given way to qualifying groups followed by a knockout competition from the quarter-finals onwards. Yugoslavia prolonged the early eastern dominance by winning that first final in Mostar. Italy, though, would leave the greatest mark on the competition, winning the U21 championship on five occasions, most recently in 2004 when they defeated Serbia and Montenegro 3-0 in Bochum.

Italy were first crowned champions in 1992 and successfully defended their title two years later when for the first time the semi-finals and final were played as a single tournament in France. Pierluigi Orlandini scored the extra-time winner for Italy in Montpellier in the first final to be decided by a single match. The final tournament was expanded to eight teams in Romania in 1998, when Spain interrupted Italy's run of success, but the Azzurrini were back on top in 2000, the year the group stage was introduced in the final tournament. The current format came into place in 2002 when the Czech Republic triumphed in Switzerland.

In 2007 the event was switched to odd years to avoid clashing with the UEFA European Championship and FIFA World Cup. So, with the U21 Championship taking centre stage, the Netherlands put on a show on home soil beating Serbia 4-1 in the final to lift the crown. They failed to make it a hat-trick two years later as Switzerland knocked them out in qualifying and it was Germany's time to shine, Horst Hrubesch's team avenging the 1982 final defeat by England with a record 4-0 triumph in Malmö. Spain made it three victories in 2011, overcoming Switzerland 2-0 in Denmark, and two years later retained the title by defeating Italy 4-2 in Israel.

UEFA European Under-21 Championship historical statistics

Previous winners

2013: Spain
2011: Spain
2009: Germany
2007: Netherlands
2006: Netherlands
2004: Italy
2002: Czech Republic
2000: Italy
1998: Spain
1996: Italy
1994: Italy
1992: Italy
1990: Soviet Union
1988: France
1986: Spain
1984: England
1982: England
1980: Soviet Union
1978: Yugoslavia

Biggest win

All time

Spain 14-0 San Marino, 08/02/2005
2006 qualifying group stage, Santo Domingo, El Ejido

Final tournament

England 6-0 Turkey, 29/05/2000
2000 final tournament group stage, Tehelné Pole Stadium, Bratislava

Final

Germany 4-0 England, 29/06/2009
2009, Malmö New Stadium, Malmö, Sweden

Most goals in a game

All time

Spain 14-0 San Marino, 08/02/2005
2006 qualifying group stage, Santo Domingo, El Ejido

Final tournament

Czech Republic 4-3 Croatia, 01/06/2000
2000 group stage, Mestský Stadium, Trenčín, Slovakia

Final

Yugoslavia 4-4 East Germany 31/05/1978
(second leg, Yugoslavia won 5-4 on agg), Mostar, Yugoslavia

Record attendance

All time

42,000: Turkey 1-1 Germany, 18/11/2003

2004 qualifying play-off, Sükrü Saraçoglu Stadium, Istanbul

Final tournament

5,500: Italy 1-1 Spain (Italy win 5-4 on pens), 31/05/1996

1996 final, Olímpico de Montjuïc, Barcelona

Leading scorers

All time

Lampros Choutos (Greece)	15
Tomáš Pekhart (Czech Republic)	14
Roy Makaay (Netherlands)	14
Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (Netherlands)	14

Final tournament (since 2000)

Marcus Berg (Sweden, 2009)	7
Adrián López (Spain, 2011)	5
Álvaro Morata (Spain, 2014)	4
Alberto Gilardino (Italy, 2004)	4
Andrea Pirlo (Italy, 2000)	4
Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (Netherlands, 2006)	4
Maceo Rigters (Netherlands, 2007)	4
Johan Elmander (Sweden, 2004)	4





UEFA
ROUTE DE GENÈVE 46
CH-1260 NYON 2
SWITZERLAND
TELEPHONE: +41 848 00 27 27
TELEFAX: +41 848 01 27 27
UEFA.com

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