

## ESF NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2015



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October 2015

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### EDITORIAL

**Ami Baran**

*Secretary General, Development*

**Dear Friends,**

The summer of 2015 has been an incredible summer for softball and for our players and coaches, and hopefully will be remembered as the beginning of a new era for the ESF.

I say this because, for the past six years, together with all our members, we have taken incredible steps towards promoting and developing softball into a household name in Europe. It is true that we are not as big as some of the more popular sports, but our reach has widened -- not only throughout Europe but globally.

We are respected by all of our friends from abroad who are constantly looking to join us in our programs, tournaments and projects, for they can see the commitment we have to raising the quality and professionalism of our sport.

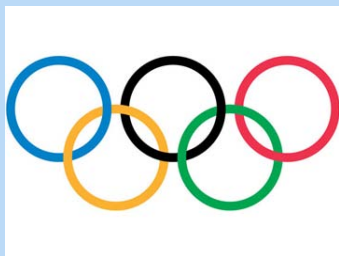
Exciting clinics during our Championships and Cups, with names such as Michelle Smith, Jarrad Martin and Thomas Makea, and more than 50 hours of live streaming of games from our tournaments, has transformed our presence, through the hard work of all those involved, from a low-key European sports federation into one with showmanship, professionalism and a futuristic outlook.

I hope you will enjoy this edition of our Newsletter – and start preparing now for next season's tournaments, because they will be even better and more exciting than this year, and hopefully with a few more surprises to come!

**Ami Baran**

*Secretary General, Chair of Development  
European Softball Federation*

## SOFTBALL NEWS



**28 September 2015:** The World Baseball Softball Confederation joined players and leadership from leagues around the world in welcoming the landmark decision by the hosts of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games to propose adding baseball/softball among five new sports for the Games in 2020. Tokyo 2020's proposal for additional events must be reviewed, voted upon and formally approved by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil next August ahead of the 2016 Games.

### CEB JOINT PRESS RELEASE &ESF

Officials from the Confederation of European Baseball (CEB) and the European Softball Federation (ESF), including CEB President Jan Esselman and ESF President Andre van Overbeek, met in Prague on September 10 to discuss the position of the two organizations in relation to each other and the future of both sports in Europe.

This followed the decision, authorized by the Boards of both organizations in May 2015, to form a working group to formalize a structure for future cooperation.

The Confederations have agreed to create the European Baseball and Softball (CEB/ESF) Joint Steering Committee, which will provide guidance on key issues such as joint objectives in marketing and media, development strategy and operational issues such as joint Congresses and joint-venue competitions.

This agreement allows both organizations to cooperate in alliance, expressing their joint aspirations, while keeping their respective Confederations independent.

COMPLETE PRESS RELEASE AVAILABLE [HERE](#)

The ESF season for 2015 is now over. This year, 10 ESF tournaments were organized, four of them youth competitions. This wouldn't be possible without the countless people involved, especially the clubs that provide their facilities.

The ESF's job is to make sure that these events meet the required criteria and a professional level of organization is maintained. The Federation also ensures that there is a sufficient number of qualified umpires at every tournament. We continue to support development in all member states, and our portfolio of events is expanding for both categories: youth and adult.

You can review how the competitions went below and you can also visit our website ([competition section](#)), where there are not only complete summaries available but also links to photo galleries and video of condensed games, as well as whole streamed games. From now on, you should be able to find all the information you require about past tournaments in one place.

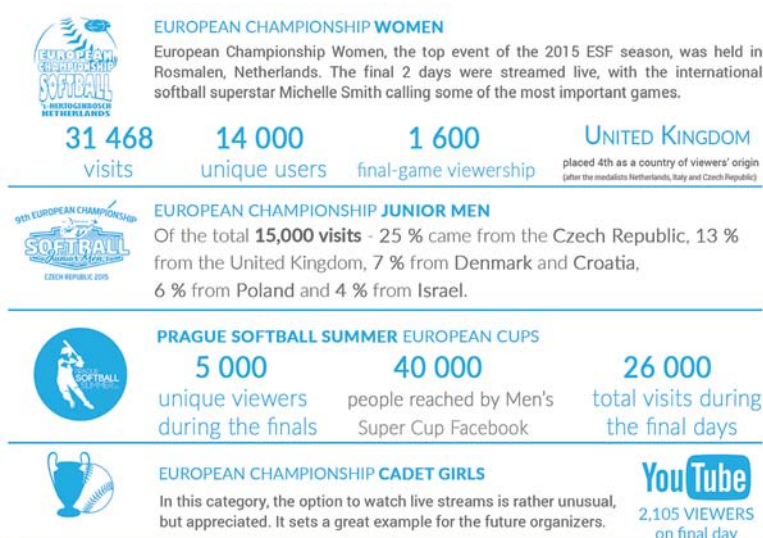
While the ESF season may be over, some national championships reach their climax at this time, and there are more softball tournaments organized for the autumn. You can find these on the ESF website -- and you can not only follow them, but enter them!

## Webstreaming in 2015

Streaming softball games has become a trend in Europe over the past few years, not only for development purposes, but to raise public awareness and generate publicity for the sport, which are key aims for the ESF.

Starting in 2010, there has always been at least one tournament per season with a live broadcast. A breakthrough came in 2014, when all the games of a single tournament were streamed: the European Men's Championship, held in the Czech Republic. These broadcasts were a great success and raised the bar for the organizers of future ESF events. During the annual Congress last February, delegates from countries which were to organize major ESF competitions in 2015 looked at possibilities for increasing live video streaming, and the Congress voted to raise the budget for webstreaming to 20,000€ for the 2015 season.

As a result of this decision, six of the 10 tournaments run by the ESF this past summer had their final days streamed live, and nearly 50 games were brought to the European softball community. This unprecedented number of games represents a milestone for the ESF's efforts in this area.



The viewer numbers above will serve as a baseline for future comparison. It's too early to know whether they represent success; only the years to come will provide a basis for making that judgement.

### Technical Commission Activity in the ESF's 2015 Season

Every member of the ESF's Technical Commission (TC) gives at least a week of their time during the crowded ESF playing season to attend and supervise tournaments, and many give two weeks, plus fulfilling extra tasks such as controlling licences, preparing playing schedules and inspecting venues.

Senior Umpire and Scoring officials also spend many extra hours preparing for and reporting on their specialist functions.



















All this effort, in conjunction with organisers, is aimed at providing European Federations, clubs, teams, players and spectators with enjoyable and professionally-staged competitions.

The 2015 season was filled with 409 games in ESF Championship and Cup competitions (and it would have been more except for some very bad weather!), watched by some 39,000 spectators in total. The games varied from shorter games for the youngest EMRYT athletes to the fiercely-contested senior Championship games for Women. The TCs take care to apply the ISF Regulations appropriately to the level of play at each competition.

A total of 26 ESF member Federations were active during the year in terms of entering teams into ESF events, and there was a range from six to 23 teams in the different tournaments, adding up to 106 entries in total compared to 91 in 2014.

With the new competitions that have been adopted for 2016 and beyond by the ESF for Men's Slowpitch and for Men's and Women's Masters Fastpitch, activity is set to grow even more – so more work for the TC!

## ESF COMPETITIONS 2015

|  | GOLD   | SILVER  | BRONZE   |
|--|--|---|--|
| <b>EChCG</b><br>Cadet Girls' ECh       | <br>Italy           | <br>Czech Republic      | <br>Russia                |
| <b>ESCJW</b><br>Super Cup Junior Women | <br>Arrows Ostrava  | <br>Birds Zoetermeer    | <br>Joudrs Praha          |
| <b>EChJM</b><br>Junior Men's ECh       | <br>Czech Republic  | <br>Denmark             | <br>Croatia               |
| <b>EChW</b><br>Women's ECh             | <br>Italy           | <br>Netherlands         | <br>Czech Republic        |
| <b>EChCS</b><br>Co-ed Slowpitch        | <br>Great Britain   | <br>Czech Republic      | <br>Ireland               |
| <b>EMRYT</b><br>M. Romeo Youth Trophy  | <br>Moscovia        | <br>Moscomsport         | <br>Italy                 |
| <b>ECWCW</b><br>Cup Winners Cup        | <br>Fiorini Forli  | <br>Joudrs Praha       | <br>Neunkirchen          |
| <b>EPCW</b><br>Premiere Cup            | <br>Bussolego     | <br>La Loggia         | <br>Sparks              |
| <b>ECW</b><br>Women's Cup              | <br>Les Comanches | <br>Sant Boi          | <br>Princ               |
| <b>ESCM</b><br>Super Cup Men           | <br>Pro Roma      | <br>Brasschaat Braves | <br>Horsholm Hurricanes |

### European Championship Women

Twenty teams participated in this tournament, held in Rosmalen in the Netherlands, which made it the second largest ESF event of the 2015 season.

The Netherlands and Italy have been competing for gold at European Championships since 1979, and it was clear early on that these two teams would be fighting for the trophy once again. The Dutch have been undefeated European Champions for the past six years, but with several players having retired from the Dutch team after the World Championships in 2014, the Italian players saw a chance and were determined to take it.

With this year's win, Italy became the most successful country in terms of titles in the history of European women's softball.

The tournament was enhanced by the presence of former Olympian Michele Smith, who was engaged by the ESF to deliver pitching clinics and share her softball experience and knowledge. Michele not only trained with some national team players and coaches at the event, but also acted as a sportscaster during the live telecasts.



**ESF First Vice President Gabriel Waage said:**

*“The EChW was played as a big tournament for the third time, and this year’s tournament has confirmed that it was the right decision to establish European Championships based on this format. We welcomed two new countries – Slovenia and Ireland – which shows the extension of women’s fastpitch all over Europe. These teams had the chance to see higher-level fastpitch played by the top European countries, which for these new teams can create aspirations to be achieved in the future. Playing all the games in one complex helped to create a very friendly atmosphere, which is very important. Games on the last two days were streamed live, and the number of viewers we achieved was quite impressive. We can use this to our advantage when we work on promoting softball.”*

### European Cups

The European **Men’s Super Cup**, with 23 teams participating, was held in Prague, where nearly 100 games were played on four fields. After the round-robin games, the teams were divided into ESF and Super Cup brackets, where they continued their journey to win trophies.

A special participant was the Temperzone Junior Black Sox from New Zealand, the country that has won six Men’s World Championships. Their coaches, Jarrad Martin and Thomas Makea, held two clinics during their stay, providing those present with a chance to listen to these world champions talk about the way to the top.

Pro Roma (*left*) confirmed their dominance in the tournament and remained undefeated. Their win in the men’s Super Cup concludes an exceptional year for Italian softball. Magos Tenerife (*right*) seized the title in the ESF bracket.



In women’s competition, Italian teams continued to prove the depth of their programme.

Bussolengo won the European **Premiere Cup**, where national champions come to determine the best fastpitch club in Europe, and the European **Cup Winner’s Cup** is now in the hands of the Italian team Fiorini Forli (*bottom left*).

To complete the list of winners, Les Comanches (*bottom right*) from France won the title in the European Women’s **Cup**, the lowest bracket of women’s club competitions, played in Dupnitsa, Bulgaria and advanced to the Premiere Cup for the next season.



### European Championship Co-ed Slowpitch

Team Great Britain has been dominating in this competition since it was established in 1998, and they won the title yet again this year in Dupnitsa, Bulgaria, without losing a game – their 10th straight title.

Meanwhile, the ESF has announced a new competition for the 2016 season: the European Men's Slowpitch Championship. The slowpitch community is anxious to see whether Great Britain will dominate in this format as well.



## YOUTH COMPETITIONS 2015

### European Championship Junior Men

For the fourth time in a row, the Czech Republic won the Championship, which they hosted in the town of Most, with Denmark second and Croatia third.



### European Championship Cadet Girls

The Italian national team has not participated in this competition regularly, but this year they were the host country as the tournament was held in Nuoro, Sardinia, and the Italians were the strongest team, defeating the Czech Republic in the final. Russia finished third.



### European Super Cup Junior Women

A Super Cup for Under-19 women's teams was organized this year for the first time in ESF history, as another means of raising the level of fastpitch in Europe. This competition provides the means for players who are on the verge of entering the senior category to gain more experience of international competition. Seven teams entered the new competition and Arrows Ostrava, team from the Czech Republic, became the first winner in this category.



### European Massimo Romeo Youth Trophy

This was the fourth edition of this Under-13 girls' tournament, also known as a Festival of Youth. The ESF has included this tournament in its competition portfolio and treats it with appropriate care and services. The young girls who participate in the tournament get the experience of playing in European competition, which will serve them well as they move into higher age group categories. Ten teams took part and Russian teams were first and second, with Italian teams finishing behind them in third and fourth place.







BaseballSoftballUK (BSUK), the development agency for the two sports in Great Britain, is seeking to recruit a full-time Fastpitch Softball Development Officer, initially on a one-year contract beginning in March 2016.



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