

Frequently Asked Questions

Euro Cup Eligibility Criteria

Why are we making the changes?

Over the last few years of the competition several countries have expressed how difficult it is to qualify players to play in the 9s game. This competition supports the growth of the game across Europe and ensuring that all countries that would like to take part can is key to our future growth.

Why are we making the changes now?

At the AGM held in 2022, the AFL Europe Commission (Commission) deemed it necessary to update the Eligibility Rules that govern our international competitions. To do this, we created an Eligibility Committee in September 2022 and supporting Charter to guide its' purpose. The role of the Eligibility Special Committee was to oversee and help manage the implementation of the updated eligibility criteria, management and monitoring process including:

1. rollout and implementation of the revised eligibility criteria across all affiliate countries.
2. monitoring and reviewing issues that may impede the goals, objectives, and compliance with the eligibility criteria.
3. maintenance of the eligibility criteria based on changes that may occur regarding visas, immigration and residency and growth of AFL participation in Europe.
4. community communication and advocacy to ensure the community understands the criteria, processes, decisions, and reasons for them.
5. monitoring and maintenance of records to ensure compliance with eligibility criteria; and
6. reporting to the board on any significant circumstances which may affect the eligibility criteria.

I am confused about the rationale for change. What were the problems with the previous eligibility criteria?

It is worth noting that we experienced regular complaints from our community, particularly in those outside of the two large teams of England and Ireland, calling out negative impacts on the game in their respective countries – it was for some teams impossible for them to enter the Euro Cup whilst working to the strict rules imposed mainly by the AFL for a different competition and whilst adjusted to the 9s game were not focused on the growth of the game.

Further, these rules had not been updated for many years, and considering the recent changes across UK and Europe, we deemed it necessary and important to reassess, which led us to undertaking the biggest governance assessment for the game in over a decade.

Will you be looking at other AFL Europe events?

Yes, all events will be reviewed during 2023.

The Euro Cup 9s competition is seen as our future growth competition, ideally help to grow and further develop countries into having an 18s team in the future and giving countries the opportunity to show case European footy at the International Cup event held in Australia.

Without adapting our game rules now, we risk isolating some countries from taking part in future events.

Who have the eligibility committee engaged with to understand what change was needed?

Since the AGM in November the Committee has engaged with the community, gathering extensive feedback from Country Presidents, and having numerous conversations across the AFL Europe community to ensure that any changes made to the eligibility rules were fit for purpose. We also invited feedback from the community via a survey and provided a draft of these rules to the community for consideration.

When will these changes be enforced?

The intent of these rule changes is to be iterative, meaning, we recognise there will be teething issues, and we are looking for improvement, rather than landing on the definitive answer immediately.

These changes will be in place for the July 2023 Euro Cup – following the tournament we will gather feedback and assess how the changes went.

What happens next?

The Eligibility Advisory Committee will be set up and will assist the Commission in carrying out its duties by providing independent and objective review, advice, and assistance in developing board policy and monitoring corporate activity within the scope of its remit and making recommendations to the Commission for its resolution.

This Eligibility Advisory Committee will be created to represent the community and the Commission, overseeing the operational delivery of the newly established rules.

Who will be on the Eligibility Special Committee?

This will be chaired by Sarah Howell, supported by Seb Permain (a UEFA lawyer), and the soon to be appointed new General Manager of AFL Europe, and some additional community representatives who were involved in the initial committee.

This committee will work with the community and report into the Commission, to ensure these updates are in line with the community's needs.

The eligibility for International Cup is unlikely to mirror these changes so why change the criteria at Europe level for then it to be different at international level? The more tournament style footy players get to play in the lead up to IC the better prepared players will be for IC

It is important to note these rules are for the 9s competition only – this game is unique to Europe. The rules for the 18s will remain largely in line with the International Cup rules but will also be subject to review in the coming period of time.

Why aren't we focusing on homegrown talent?

Homegrown talent will always be the focus of the competition. To allow the game to grow across Europe, we understand the need to support affiliated teams and as such those teams *can apply* for leniency, if the players meet the criteria set out. We want to ensure we have clear rules that help us grow the size and quality of the competitions that are accessible to our community.

Growing the game is vital to the sport but several countries have struggled to field teams, competitive or otherwise, and subsequently stopped attending the competition due to not being able to meet all of the requirements of the eligibility previously in place.

The new rules allow for some additional flexibility and teams *can apply* for the inclusion of Australians. Further, it is standard practice across sports globally that non-home-grown players can represent another country – if they meet certain criteria.

Does a player who was born in Australia and is a full citizen of another country, and meets all the representation criteria, need to submit an exemption request?

No, if a player is a Full Citizen and meets the Eligibility Criteria, they do not need to apply for an exemption.

How will Australian players be recognized by the tournament regarding their on-field presence?

To identify players born in Australia, and to ensure teams are adhering to the rules with regards the number allowed on the field at any one time, they will be given tape to wear on their arms.

Why is the representation criterion set so high? (State level or higher)

AFL in Europe is still very much at a beginner/intermediate level for most countries. The game is geared for Europe and to have other nationals playing who have played at a higher level or at professional level would not allow teams to grow the game naturally. It would also give those teams an unfair advantage if there weren't restrictions on these players. We need to strike a balance between developing the game across the region, whilst raising the standard of the competition. These rules instead aim to help maintain the right balance.



Who do AFL Europe hope these modifications will help the most?

The aim of AFL Europe is to try to grow the game amongst its affiliated countries, meaning the number of participants, and the standard of play. The rules are there to help countries grow the sport in a fair and equitable way for everyone.

Once these changes are implemented it will be very difficult to reverse – how have you engaged with the community to ensure any concerns that these changes will mean are given enough time to be heard and addressed.

We have consulted and engaged with the community heavily over the last 9 months, as detailed above.

Further, these rules will be brought in for this year's Euro Cup as a trial and if they do not work or need some revision that will be completed. We will also be announcing the creation of a new Advisory Sub Committee, which will take over the leadership of delivering, managing, and enforcing these rules for the Euro Cup, and working with the community to update other relevant ones.

How are you going to manage these rules? Are we looking at an honesty system that players self-report or do we have something in place which allows us to check?

The intent of these rules is to be self-regulating, and yes, will require an honesty system. We expect the countries, and team managers to take accountability for managing the rules.

Having said that, the Advisory Committee will be empowered to follow up, assess, manage and regulate these rules, which could include spot checks and requests for evidence, as they see fit.

Our participation software, Play HQ, also has the ability to track this detail, and this will continue to be rolled out across the community in due course, which will also assist us maintaining the integrity of this process.

We are going to encounter several older Australians that have become European nationals that were paid to play when they were younger (10-15-20 years ago), mostly probably in the bottom tier of the competition but possibly a few in the top half. Has there been any discussion around the approach to those types or is it a wait and see what exemption requests are received and discuss it then?

This will be on a case-by-case basis and be subjected to the new rules that we are putting in place.

What are the thoughts of the eligibility committee on these changes?

We see this new policy as a positive step towards AFL building in Europe. Teams having a few exemptions means they are competitive and having some experience in your team means it brings others along. Better to have a squad of 10 home-grown and two or three exemptions, than not travelling at all.

How do we apply for exemptions?

A google sheet link has been set up allowing players to enter their details for each of the criteria. This will then allow the committee to review and provide feedback on the player as well as starting a tracker.

The link is can be found here and will be shared again with the formal Euro Cup documentation - <https://forms.gle/5F5E9zR5fckZ9YAx6>

When can I submit an exemption request?

Exemption Requests can be submitted at any time in the 9 months leading up to a Euro Cup and will be reviewed monthly by the Committee.