

Communication No. 2780

Challenger Series in Figure Skating Season 2026/27

1. PREAMBLE

The Challenger Series, introduced during the 2014/15 season as series of International Figure Skating Competitions financially supported by the ISU has proven to be successful and an excellent tool for many Skaters to get prepared for qualifying and competing in ISU Championships.

The ISU Council reiterates that being mindful that the ISU support towards the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating is restricted to a limited group of organizing ISU Members, to a limited number of Skaters and to a limited number of Officials, the ISU Council agreed to financially support a restricted group of identified ISU Members traditionally staging International Figure Skating Competitions being part of the ISU Event Calendar.

This ISU support has the objective to ensure the proper and consistent organization and conduct of up to ten (10) International Competitions linked together within the Challenger Series giving adequate opportunities for many Skaters to compete at the international senior level and earn World Standing Points and to increase the opportunity for Officials to officiate at an international level.

Since the season 2019/20, only five (5) Competitions include Pair Skating to ensure that these Competitions have the minimum number of Pairs required to fulfil the criteria for a Challenger Series Competition.

2. COMPETITIONS INCLUDED

In recognition of the long standing tradition and merit of the following International Competitions, there will be a core group of four (4) Challenger Series Competitions, namely:

- Nebelhorn-Trophy in Oberstdorf (GER)
- Ondrej Nepela Trophy in Bratislava (SVK)
- Golden Spin of Zagreb (CRO)
- One Competition in Canada or the United States to be agreed upon among the ISU Figure Skating Members in Canada and the United States.

The above-mentioned core group of four (4) Challenger Series Competitions remains nevertheless subject to receiving an application from the concerned ISU Members and subject to ISU Council confirmation (see Paragraph 4 below for the details for the applications).

Up to a maximum of six (6) additional International Figure Skating Competitions may be added by the ISU Council at its full discretion based on the applications from organizing ISU Members from all Continents to be submitted to the ISU **by the deadline of May 10, 2026**.

3. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICABLE COMPETITIONS

Each International Competition must be of “Senior” category (see ISU General Regulations 2024, Rule 108, paragraph 3.a).

The International Competition must be scheduled between August 15, 2026 and February 15, 2027. The Competitions, included in the “Challenger Series”, should not, if possible, clash with the dates of the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating events.

The International Competition must include **entries** in at least 3 disciplines of the Figure Skating Branch (Men, Women, Pair Skating, Ice Dance) from minimum ten (10) different ISU Members, all disciplines combined.

In addition, the minimum number of **entries** per discipline are as follows:

- Men/Women: minimum of eight (8) entries each, from at least four (4) ISU Members;
- Pair Skating: minimum of five (5) entries from at least three (3) ISU Members;
- Ice Dance: minimum of six (6) entries from at least four (4) ISU Members.

For the criteria relating to the awarding of special World Standing Points please refer to Paragraph 6 below.

Entries may be based on invitations extended to selected ISU Members or based on open entries available to all ISU Members. The entry deadline for each Competition should be set 30 days prior to the first official practice day. Late entries will need the approval of the ISU Vice President Figure Skating.

Each Competition must strictly comply with the ISU Constitution 2025, General and Special Regulations and Technical Rules 2024, in particular but not limited Rules 102, 108, 352 and 353.

Following the principles of Rule 420, paragraph 5.a) of the current 2024 Special Regulations Single & Pair Skating/Ice Dance, the members of each individual Technical Panel (Technical Controller and the Technical Specialists) must not be from the same ISU Member. A minimum of two Technical Panel members must have the qualification of “ISU”, the third one may have the qualification “International”.

The Referee must have at least the qualification “International” and can be of the same ISU Member as one member of the Technical Panel (Technical Controller and Technical Specialists).

The Data Operator and the Replay Operator must have the qualification of at least “International”.

No exception can be granted with respect to the above-mentioned composition of the Technical Panels and the qualification of the Referees and Data & Replay Operators.

The panel of Judges must include at least 7 Judges, all from different ISU Members. In exceptional cases the minimum of 6 Judges per panel may be authorized by the ISU Vice President Figure Skating. The qualification of the Judges must be at least “International”.

The Technical Panel members, the Referee and the Data and Replay Operators of International Competitions included in the Challenger Series must be proposed by the respective organizing ISU Member to the ISU Secretariat latest 45 days prior to the first day of the Competition. Based on the information received and further to internal ISU consultations, involving possible changes as necessary to comply with the above-mentioned minimum requirements, the ISU Vice President Figure Skating will decide upon the final appointments of the above-mentioned Officials. The respective organizing ISU Member will be informed through the ISU Secretariat and must inform the participating ISU Members accordingly.

Any subsequent changes due to the non-availability of previously appointed Technical Panel members, the Referees and the Data & Replay Operators must be announced by the organizing ISU Member to the ISU Vice President Figure Skating with copy to the ISU Secretariat and the respective ISU Technical Committee Chair(s). If such changes would not be in line with the above-mentioned minimum requirements, the concerned organizing ISU Members will be notified through the ISU Secretariat for possible adjustments as decided by the ISU Vice President Figure Skating.

If ultimately the organizing ISU Member is unable to apply the necessary adjustments and the final appointments of the above-mentioned Officials would not meet the above-mentioned minimum requirements and have an impact on the status of the concerned International Competition as a Challenger Series Competition and consequently on the World Standing Points and/or the validity of the Minimum Total Elements Scores, then the concerned organizing ISU Member will be informed accordingly through the ISU Secretariat. The organizing ISU Member must immediately inform the participating ISU Members accordingly.

The Competition format must include the Short Program and Free Skating in the Single and Pair Skating disciplines and the Rhythm Dance and Free Dance in the Ice Dance discipline.

The Competition results must be calculated according to the valid ISU Special Regulations Single & Pair Skating/Ice Dance, currently Rules 352 and 353 of 2024 Special Regulations Single & Pair Skating/Ice Dance. The official calculation program of the ISU must be used.

Entry fees for participation may not exceed the value of CHF 70.00 per single Skater and CHF 100.00 per Pair Skating or Ice Dance couple.

The Draws for the starting order must follow the ISU Rule 512 and 513. The starting order for the Free Skating/Free Dance should be in the reverse order of the result of the Short Program/Rhythm Dance.

Practice sessions must be offered to the participants with a priority to the category "Senior" allowing enough time for the Skaters/Couples to complete their program at least once in the main arena prior to the Competition.

Competition times should respect the Rule 344, Paragraph 3.

4. APPLICATION & SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR THE ORGANIZING ISU MEMBERS OF THE CHALLENGER SERIES COMPETITIONS

ISU Members interested to have an International Competition regularly being organized in their country to become a Challenger Series Competition, must apply to the ISU Office for inclusion into the Challenger Series of their planned International Competition **scheduled between August 15, 2026 and February 15, 2027**. The Competitions, included in the "Challenger Series", should not, if possible, clash with the dates of the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating events.

The application must reach the ISU Secretariat (entries@isu.org) by **May 10, 2026** and needs to include:

- Description of the venue
- Description of the hotel(s)
- Structure of the Organizing Committee
- History/tradition of the International Competition.

After evaluation of the applications received, the ISU Council will decide upon up to 6 additional International Competitions (in addition to those indicated in paragraph 2 above) to be included in the

Challenger Series giving preference to International Competitions having a certain tradition and continuity. The selected International Competitions included in the Challenger Series will be published through an ISU Communication.

5. PARTICIPATION

Participation is open to all Skaters/Couples of ISU Members with a maximum of 3 entries per category (except for the Host ISU Member), who are eligible for International "Senior" Competitions by age (Rule 108) and by citizenship (109) and entered through the respective ISU Member. There is a limitation for the Skaters/Couples to three (3) participations in the Challenger Series Competitions. The participation of Skaters from the organizing ISU Member into the respective Challenger Series Competition is not limited. Participation in any of an ISU Junior Grand Prix event or a (Senior) Grand Prix event does not limit the participation in the Challenger Series Competitions. However Skaters having participated in the Junior and/or (Senior) ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating during the same season should not have priority to enter the Challengers Series Competitions.

Skaters/couples, who entered into a Challenger Series Competition and withdrew from that Competition after the entry deadline without a significant reason (injury/illness or bereavement in the family), may enter another Challenger Series Competition of the same season only after having sent explanations of their withdrawal to the Vice President Figure Skating who may decide upon the entry on a case by case basis.

6. CHALLENGER SERIES RANKING

At the end of the Challenger Series, after the last Competition of the season has been concluded, the two highest final scores in the up to three different Challenger Series Competitions of each competitor/couple will be added and taken into consideration to form a Challenger Series Ranking which will be published on the ISU website.

7. PRIZE MONEY

The top three placed Skaters/Couples of the annual Challenger Series Ranking will receive ISU Prize Money as follows which will be paid to the concerned Skaters by the ISU through their respective ISU Members:

Men and Women:

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|-----------------------|--------------|
| 1 st place | USD 4'500.00 |
| 2 nd place | USD 3'500.00 |
| 3 rd place | USD 2'300.00 |

Pair Skating and Ice Dance:

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| 1 st place | USD 5'500.00 |
| 2 nd place | USD 4'500.00 |
| 3 rd place | USD 3'500.00 |

8. ANTI-DOPING TESTS

Anti-Doping Tests are not mandatory but may be performed at the discretion of each local Organizing Committee in line with the ISU Anti-Doping Rules and ISU Anti-Doping Procedures (ISU Communications No 2472 or any updates of this Communication).

9. OFFICIALS REMUNERATION

The Judges, the Referees, the Technical Controllers, the Technical Specialists and the Data & Replay Operators officiating in the “senior” Competitions of a Challenger Series will, at the expense of the organizing ISU Member, receive remuneration of USD 250 for the entire Competition or the equivalent in the local currency. Any Official officiating besides in the “senior” category also in another category (for example junior), will at the expense of the organizing ISU Member receive an additional amount of USD 125 (or equivalent in another currency) of remuneration per additional day of service.

10. ISU CONTRIBUTION

Each ISU Member, organizing a Challenger Series Competition will receive an ISU contribution of USD 22'500. This contribution will be paid when the Competition has been successfully completed in line with the requirements included in this Communication and the ISU Statutes. The contribution must be used to cover the costs of the Technical Panel in each Competition and the remuneration of the Officials. Any remaining funds may cover ice costs or other organizational expenses.

April 24, 2026

Jae Youl Kim, President

Colin Smith, Director General