

NBA EUROPE

Which Cities Should Get Permanent Franchises?

A Data-Driven Site Selection for the NBA's 2027 European League Launch

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The NBA Is Launching a European League

2027

Target launch
date

16

Teams planned
(12 perm. + 4 qual.)

120+

Investor bids
submitted

\$1B+

Multiple bids
exceeding this

- In January 2026, the NBA and FIBA announced a separate European league — not an extension of the 30-team NBA.
- Target countries: England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey. Basketball is Europe's #2 sport with 270M fans.
- A record 71 Europeans on 2025–26 NBA rosters. The talent pipeline has never been deeper.

"Basketball's probably the fastest-growing sport in the world right now, and it's a huge No. 2 sport in Europe behind soccer, so I think there's a real opportunity" - NBA Commissioner Adam Silver

Not All European Cities Are Equal

NFL Europe Failed

The NFL's European league (1991–2007) collapsed due to poor site selection, weak demand, and unsustainable economics. The NBA cannot repeat this mistake.

Market Imbalance

London's metro GDP is 10x Athens'. Corporate sponsor pools, arena quality, and basketball culture vary enormously. A league is only as strong as its weakest franchise.

EuroLeague Tension

The EuroLeague has threatened legal action if the NBA poaches its clubs. Some cities may end up with competing teams. The NBA must pick markets strong enough to absorb this friction.

The 12 permanent franchise slots will define the league's ceiling. Getting this wrong is existential.

THE QUESTION

Which 12 European cities should receive permanent NBA Europe franchises?

*And which 4 cities are the strongest
future expansion candidates?*





Our Recommended 12 Permanent Franchises

1. London

2. Paris

3. Madrid

4. Berlin

5. Cologne

6. Munich

7. Athens

8. Istanbul

9. Milan

10. Amsterdam

11. Barcelona

12. Belgrade

TIER 2 — Qualifying / Future Candidates


Lyon

Prague

Rome

Zurich

 Tier 1: Permanent (12)

 Tier 2: Qualifying (4)



Scoring Framework: Four Dimensions

Market Size & Corporate Depth

Metro population, GDP/capita, entertainment spending, Fortune 500 HQs

Basketball Demand

EuroLeague attendance, Google Trends "NBA," NBA players per capita, FIBA ranking

Arena Infrastructure

Venue capacity & suitability vs. NBA standard (18–20K seats)

Logistics & Travel

Proximity to other host cities, time zone alignment, travel efficiency for European schedule

Dimensions normalized 0–100. Weights derived from correlation with existing NBA team revenue. Sensitivity analysis tests how the top-12 selection shifts.



Methodology & Assumptions

How We Scored

20 candidate cities evaluated across 4 dimensions using public data from Eurostat, Forbes, EuroLeague, Google Trends, and FIBA

Min-max normalization (0–100) applied to each sub-metric across all 20 cities, then aggregated into dimension scores

Composite = $0.35 \times \text{Market} + 0.25 \times \text{Demand} + 0.15 \times \text{Arena} + 0.25 \times \text{Geography}$

Key Assumptions

- NBA Europe is a separate league — we measure intra-European travel clustering, not distance to US cities
- Cities need ~18,000-seat arenas to meet NBA standards; smaller venues score proportionally lower
- Market size weighted highest because metro GDP correlates most strongly with NBA franchise revenue
- Google Trends and League Pass are demand proxies — they measure interest, not willingness to pay
- Sensitivity analysis tests 5 weighting schemes to ensure rankings are robust

Data Sources & Tools

Input	Source
Metro population & GDP	Eurostat, Wikipedia, OECD
Corporate depth	Fortune Global 500 (2024)
EuroLeague attendance	BasketNews, Wikipedia
NBA interest / demand	Google Trends, NBA.com
NBA player pipeline	Basketball Reference
Arena capacity	Wikipedia, venue websites
Purchasing power	NielsenIQ GfK (2024)
NBA team benchmarks	Forbes Valuations (2025)
Geographic distances	Haversine formula (Python)

Platforms Used

Python: Data collection & scoring

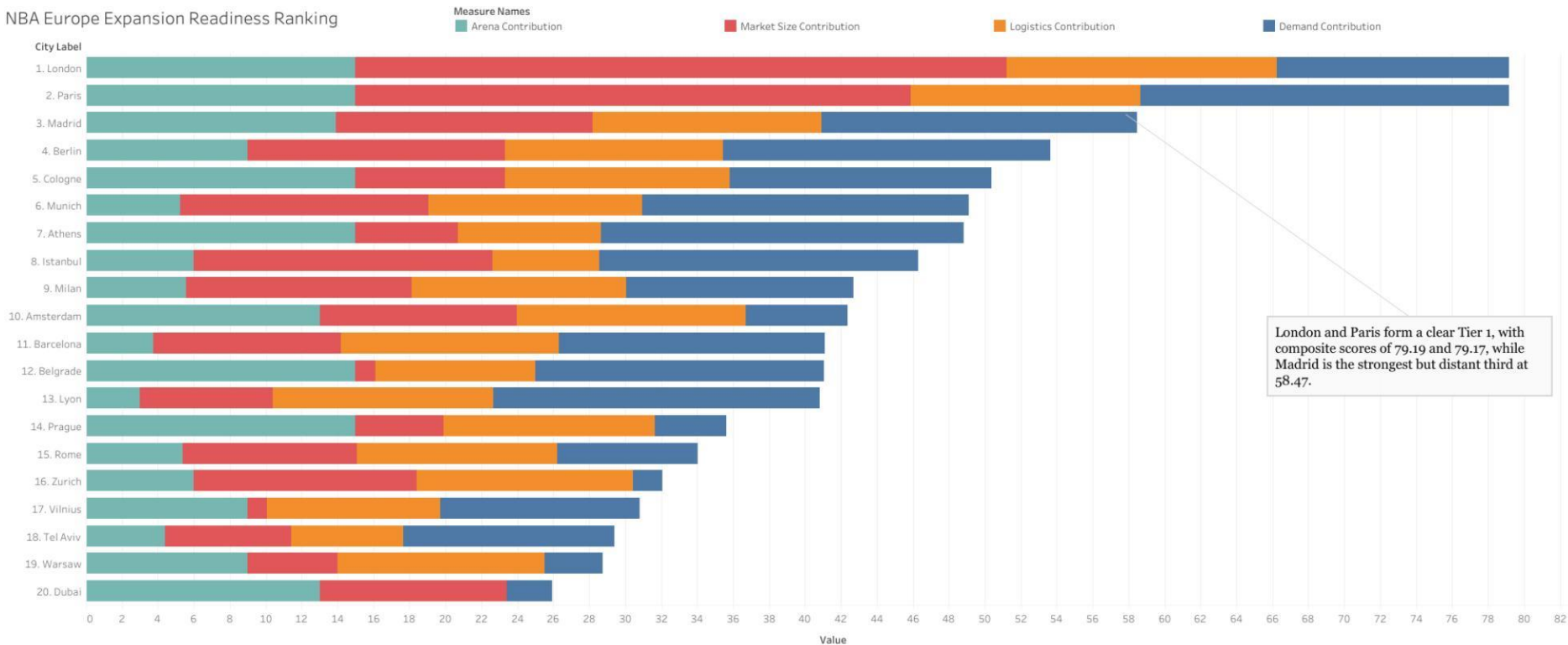
Tableau: Data visualization

European Cities Readiness



This chart ranks the 20 candidate cities by overall Expansion Readiness Score, combining market size, basketball demand, arena infrastructure, and logistics into a single weighted index

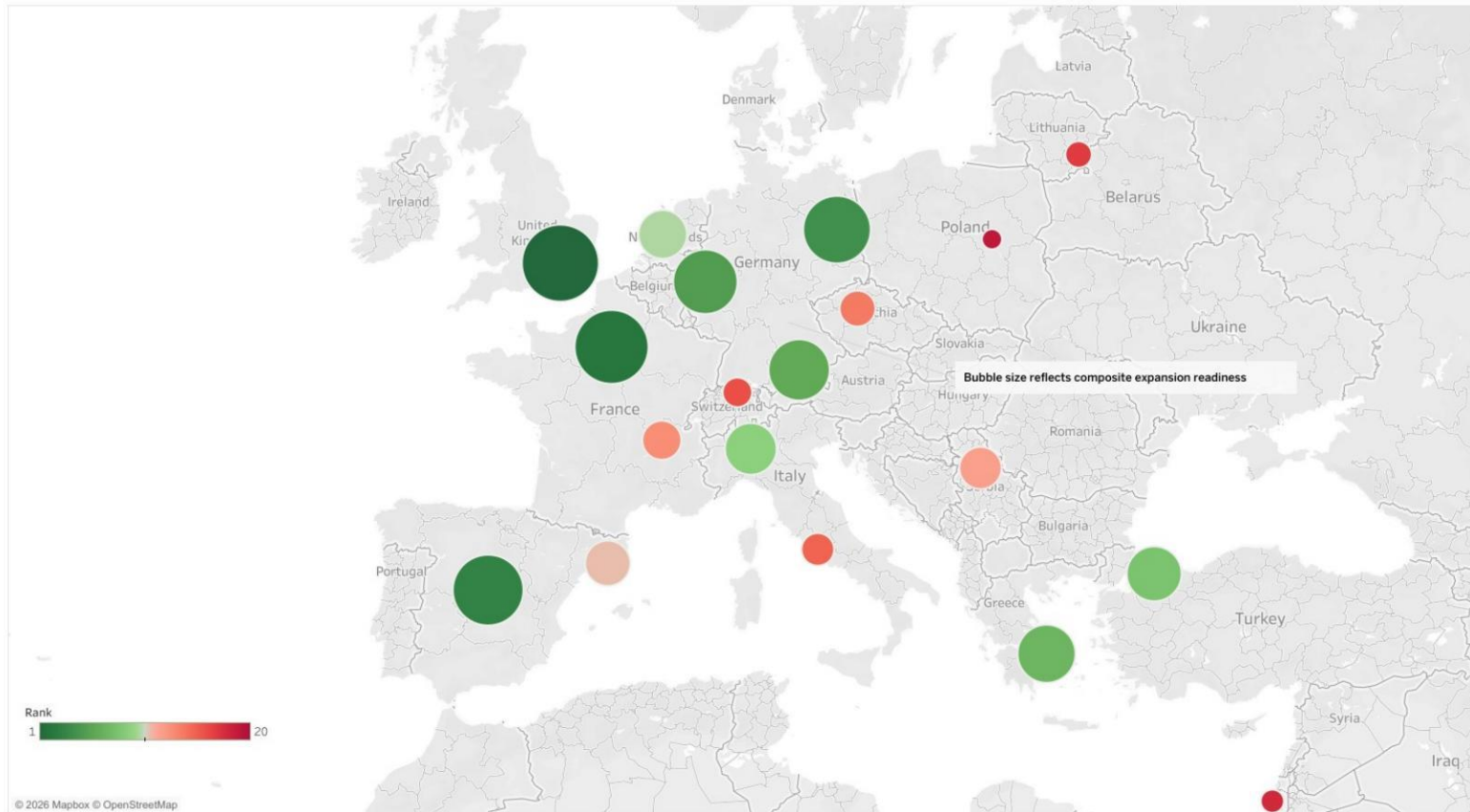
NBA Europe Expansion Readiness Ranking



European Cities Readiness

European City Readiness Score	European Expansion Map	Time Comparison
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Where are the strongest European Expansion Candidates Located?



This map plots all 20 candidate cities geographically and scales each marker by overall readiness, helping show how market quality is distributed across Europe

The strongest candidates are concentrated in Western Europe, with London and Paris standing out as the only markets that combine elite scale with NBA-ready venues and manageable logistics.



What Is Holding Each European Candidates Back?

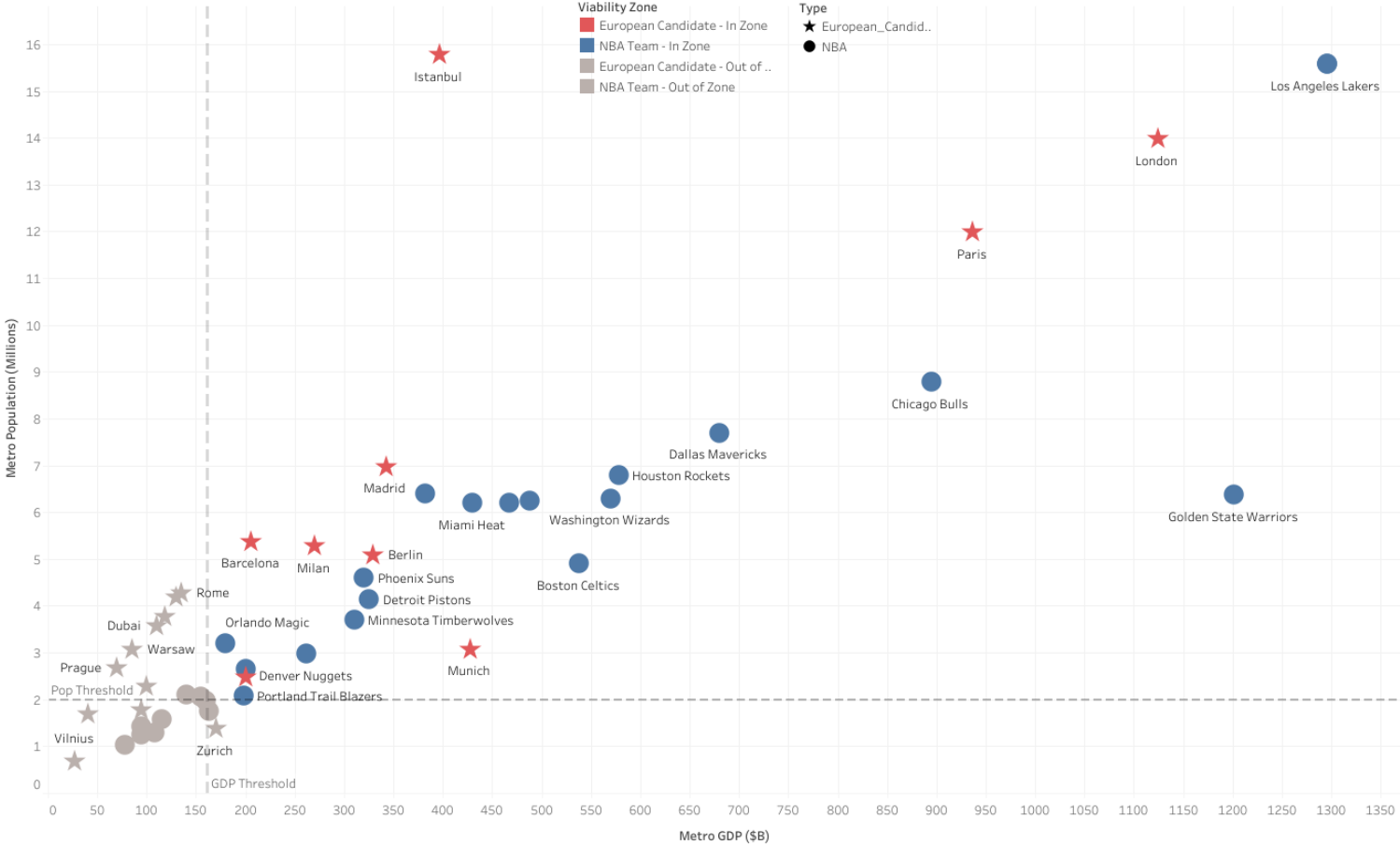
Rank	City1	Dimension1			
		Arena Infrastructure	Basketball Demand	Logistics & Travel	Market Size & Corporate Depth
1	London	100.0	43.2	100.0	90.6
2	Paris	100.0	68.4	85.0	77.2
3	Madrid	92.7	58.5	85.0	35.7
4	Berlin	60.0	60.7	80.9	35.7
5	Cologne	100.0	48.4	83.4	20.8
6	Munich	35.0	60.6	79.3	34.5
7	Athens	100.0	67.4	52.9	14.2
8	Istanbul	40.0	59.1	39.5	41.6
9	Milan	37.0	42.2	79.3	31.5
10	Amsterdam	86.7	18.9	85.0	27.4
11	Barcelona	25.0	49.3	80.9	26.1
12	Belgrade	100.0	53.6	59.4	2.7
13	Lyon	20.0	60.5	81.8	18.5
14	Prague	100.0	13.2	78.5	12.2
15	Rome	36.0	26.0	74.4	24.2
16	Zurich	40.0	5.4	80.1	31.0
17	Vilnius	60.0	37.0	64.3	2.7
18	Tel Aviv	29.2	39.2	41.4	17.6
19	Warsaw	60.0	10.8	76.8	12.4
20	Dubai	86.7	8.5	0.0	26.0

Each cell shows a 0–100 score on one of the four dimensions.

London and Paris are the only cities with no major weak spots; the rest fail for different reasons, such as Athens on market size, Istanbul on logistics, or Amsterdam on basketball demand

European candidate cities are plotted against existing NBA markets on metro GDP and metro population. Cities above both threshold lines fall inside the NBA viability zone.

Which European Cities Fall Inside the NBA Viability Zone?





Recommendations & Limitations

RECOMMENDED 12 PERMANENT SLOTS

London, Paris, Madrid, Berlin

Cologne, Munich, Athens, Istanbul

Milan, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Belgrade

Qualifying pool: Lyon, Prague, Rome, Zurich

SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

London and Paris remain the top two across all five weighting scenarios. The top 10 core cities are stable; slots 11–12 are contested between Barcelona, Belgrade, and Lyon.

LIMITATIONS

- Demand proxies measure interest, not willingness to pay
- Metro-level data unavailable for some markets
- EuroLeague competitive response not modeled
- Media deal & arena financing discussed qualitatively

The NBA has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a European league. Data-driven site selection should determine which cities earn permanent franchises.