he first edition of the European Cup took place during the 1955–56 season. Sixteen teams participated (some by invitation): Milan (Italy), AGF Aarhus (Denmark), Anderlecht (Belgium), Djurgården (Sweden), Gwardia Warszawa (Poland), Hibernian (Scotland), Partizan (Yugoslavia), PSV Eindhoven (Netherlands), Rapid Wien (Austria), Real Madrid (Spain), Rot-Weiss Essen (West Germany), Saarbrücken (Saar), Servette (Switzerland), Sporting CP (Portugal), Stade de Reims (France), and Vörös Lobogó (Hungary). The first European Cup match took place on 4 September 1955, and ended in a 3–3 draw between Sporting CP and Partizan.[14][15] The first goal in European Cup history was scored by João Baptista Martins of Sporting CP. The inaugural final took place at the Parc des Princes between Stade de Reims and Real Madrid. The Spanish squad came back from behind to win 4–3 thanks to goals from Alfredo Di Stéfano and Marquitos, as well as two goals from Héctor Rial.

Real Madrid successfully defended the trophy next season in their home stadium, the Santiago Bernabéu, against Fiorentina. After a scoreless first half, Real Madrid scored twice in six minutes to defeat the Italians.[16][17][18] In 1958, Milan failed to capitalise after going ahead on the scoreline twice, only for Real Madrid to equalise. The final, held in Heysel Stadium, went to extra time where Francisco Gento scored the game-winning goal to allow Real Madrid to retain the title for the third consecutive season.[16][19][20] In a rematch of the first final, Real Madrid faced Stade Reims at the Neckarstadion for the 1959 final, and won 2–0. West German side Eintracht Frankfurt became the first non-Latin team to reach the European Cup final. The 1960 final holds the record for the most goals scored, with Real Madrid beating Eintracht Frankfurt 7–3 in Hampden Park, courtesy of four goals by Ferenc Puskás and a hat-trick by Alfredo Di Stéfano. This was Real Madrid's fifth consecutive title, a record that still stands today.