



GLENN MICALLEF
MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Dear Minister Purga,
Dear Ministers,

I welcome your joint letter, which highlights your continued support for Ukraine and the values of the European Union.

I fully share the serious concerns you raise regarding recent decisions by the International Olympic Committee and certain international sport organisations to normalise the participation of Russia and Belarus in international sport competitions.

The Commission shares the view that the European Union must remain vigilant against any attempt to normalise relations with Russia through sport. In this regard, I reiterate my position expressed at the last meeting of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council:

- the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in European competitions must be guided by clear principles of respect for international law, solidarity with those affected by the war and integrity of sport;
- where and when their participation is considered, there should be no display of state symbols and no political representation.

That means maintaining consistency with the EU's political stance, while preserving fairness for athletes who are not personally responsible for their government's actions.

That is why I deeply regret that on 7 July the International Olympic Committee has decided to provisionally reintegrate the Russian National Olympic Committee.

Ms Heidy Purga
Minister of Culture of Estonia



Regarding your request to consider the necessary steps in relation to organisations whose actions are inconsistent with the values of the European Union, some important steps forward have already been taken as a follow up to the recent conclusions of the European Council¹:

- Cooperation and dialogue between EU Member States at EU level: The Commission is strongly supporting this process in the appropriate *fora* in the Council: the point on Russia's participation in sport events has been debated in the Foreign Affairs Council and in the Political Security Committee in July. Further discussions are planned at the end of summer and in autumn. In this regard, the Commission and the European External Action Service are preparing a document which will serve as background for discussions to explore further concrete measures to effectively counter Russia's strategy to return to international sport competitions despite its continuous violation of international law and norms. To avoid fragmentation and different approaches by Member States, a coordinated and unified position amongst all EU Member States on the conditions under which sporting competitions are held in EU territory is required.
- EU sanctions: The 21st package of EU restrictive measures against Russia adopted on 23 July lists Mikhail Degtyarev, Minister of Sport of the Russian Federation and President of the Russian Olympic Committee, as one of the individuals included in the sanctions list. The package also introduces a ban on the entry into the European Union for those former Russian combatants who took part in the war of aggression against Ukraine. These measures may imply bans affecting Russian athletes affiliated with military sports clubs. Arkady Dvorkovich, President of the International Chess Federation, Mikhail Mamiashvili, Vice-President of the Executive Committee of the International Federation of Wrestling as well as Stanislav Pozdnyakov, former President of the Russian Olympic Committee have also been put on the sanctions list.
- EU funding: The Commission has started to carefully analyse the funding allocated to the International Olympic Committee and those international sport federations that have announced a full reintegration of Russian and Belarusian athletes under their respective national protocols. A preliminary analysis of Erasmus+ funding indicates that no financial support is being provided to the International Olympic Committee. The analysis on all the above-mentioned international sport federations is still ongoing.

Furthermore, the Commission will seek to ensure to the maximum extent possible that organisations adopting a lenient approach towards the full participation of Russia and Belarus in European and international sporting competitions are no longer given roles in events organised by the Commission. At the same time, I believe that we need to maintain an open and constructive dialogue with the said organisations and sports federations, so as to encourage them to align their policies and practices with EU principles and values.

In their meeting of 18–19 June 2026, the Heads of State and Government of the European Union concluded that “Until there is a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, there should not be a normalisation of Russia's participation in international sports and cultural events.

Let me again express my appreciation for your determination on this matter. Your letter sends a strong message in defense of Ukraine, of the integrity of sport, and of the values of the Union. I would be grateful if you could convey my messages to all EU Member States, including the signatories of the Joint Statement.

Looking ahead, I trust that negotiations on the 22nd sanctions package will enable Member States to agree on provisions addressing the use of sport and culture by Russia as instruments of state propaganda. Such a provision would further reinforce the EU's consistent and principled response to Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine.

The European Union can only achieve its objectives effectively when it speaks with one voice. Division weakens our collective influence, while unity reinforces our ability to uphold our shared values and interests.

I remain fully available for continued dialogue with you and all Member States as we take this matter forward in a coordinated and resolute manner.

Yours faithfully,
Glenn Micallef

