



European Paralympic Committee (EPC) Position Statement on the participation of athletes and support personnel from Russia and Belarus at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games: Clarity on neutrality

Statement agreed and endorsed by the EPC Extraordinary General Assembly, held on 8 March 2024.

The European Paralympic Committee (EPC) and the majority of its community condemn the war in Ukraine in the strongest possible terms and stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian Paralympic Committee and people. It is a tragedy for millions of people who have lost friends and loved ones and who have been displaced, including athletes who not only have to face personal losses but are also unable to train in their home country or travel to international events. We sincerely thank and recognise the efforts of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) alongside all the national governments, National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) and sports organisations who have provided Ukrainian athletes with safe havens and support on their road to Paris 2024. In particular in Europe, many of us have witnessed first-hand the catastrophic effect the conflict is having on athletes and have rallied to try to minimise its effects on Para sports.

Against this background, our view is that athletes and support personnel from Russia and Belarus should not be able to compete – as neutrals or otherwise – at international competitions including the Paralympic Games. However as a democratic body and Members of the Paralympic family, we also respect the decisions made by the IPC General Assembly (29 September, 2023) with regards to the partial Membership suspensions of the Russia and Belarus NPCs, and the participation of athletes and support personnel as neutrals and on an individual basis. We do so with the expectation that the clear and transparent conditions are met by everyone.

Following extensive collaboration as well as discussions at an Extraordinary General Assembly on 8 March 2024, the EPC Membership agreed the following:



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Neutrality regulations

We acknowledge the contents of the recently published IPC document titled 'Paris 2024 Paralympic Games - Neutral Athlete and Support Personnel Regulations' that came into effect on 6 March 2024. We note the statement under paragraph 5. that *"Athletes and support personnel who have actively supported the war in Ukraine will not be eligible to be entered into the Paralympic Games"*. However we strongly believe that this should be verified by the athletes and support personnel signing a declaration to confirm this position. The wording would include the following: *I have not and do not intend to express support for the invasion of Ukraine.*

Furthermore we acknowledge the IPC's commitment to carry out an independent, external assessment of the eligibility of each athlete and support personnel against the criteria in paragraphs 5 as above, and paragraph 6 (*Athletes and support personnel who are contracted to the Russian/Belarusian military or national security agencies will not be eligible to be entered into the Paralympic Games*) of the IPC document and further clarity on this process is important to give confidence to the membership.

We recognise and support International Federations who have already adopted these requirements into their own procedures and request that the sports governed by the IPC (IPC Para sports) immediately enact the requirements as stated in the IPC document, the additional signed declarations and the independent external assessments.

Anti-Doping

In terms of anti-doping, we note that, following assurances from the IPC, as a Major Event Organization, International Federation and signatory of the World Anti-Doping Code, the IPC has a mandate to implement a testing programme before and during the Paralympic Games that ensure the values of clean sport are upheld.

We request that the IPC Pre-Games Anti-Doping Expert Group publishes the results and testing statistics from samples analysed from Neutral Paralympic Athletes and that these are verified in a WADA-accredited laboratory outside of Russia.

Logistics, safety and security

We recognise that the IPC is working with COJOP who are in turn responsible for the safety and security of the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, and that briefings will be available for stakeholders to assure them of security measures being put in place, as well as information made available through other points of contact.

We request that the IPC and COJOP investigate housing neutral athletes and support personnel outside of the main Athletes' Village, and give them access to a separate, secure means of transport to ensure everyone's safety and welfare for the entire period of the Paralympics.





Olympic Truce

We note that the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly approved the call for a truce for Paris 2024, starting seven days before the start of the Olympic Games on 26 July to seven days after the Paralympic Games close on 8 September. The IPC's actions regarding breaches of the Truce should be made at this time to minimise disruption to the Paralympic Games. We would expect that any breach of the Olympic Truce would result in the exclusion of such athletes as previously occurred.

The IPC will recognise the huge depth of feeling of NPCs displayed at Beijing 2022 Games. As is widely recognised, each EPC member retains the right to decide on their own participation in any competition including the Paralympic Games.

Conclusion

We all recognise the unique achievements of the whole Paralympic Movement within the field of human endeavour and know that the Paralympic Games can be a positive force for change. The movement has always been united in advocating for fairness, equality and equity. The athletes we represent have real and often daily experiences of those values not being upheld. We are motivated – as ever - to provide the best possible platform to change that.

