



International Handball Federation

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**Participation of Russian and Belarusian
athletes in international sports competitions**

Immediately after the start of the war in 2022, Estonia condemned Russia's massive military attack on Ukraine. Since the beginning of the war, Estonia has supported Ukraine in many ways and stood for the strongest possible sanctions against Russia and Belarus in all areas. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Estonia has unilaterally terminated all cooperation agreements with the Russia in the field of culture and sport.


Since the beginning of the war the Government of the Republic, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Estonia and the Estonian Olympic Committee have been on the position that Russian and Belarusian athletes and teams should not be allowed to participate in international sports competitions until the war in Ukraine is over.

The Government of the Republic of Estonia is on the position that competitions involving Russian and Belarusian athletes and teams cannot take place in Estonia. Considering that Estonia has been at the forefront of supporting and helping Ukraine, the Russian and Belarusian athletes in Estonia would be a clearly opposite activity. It also gives Russia and Belarus an opportunity for propaganda within the international media coverage of the competition. One of the reasons for not allowing Russian and Belarusian athletes and teams is also the safety and security themselves. Participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes and teams in international competitions in Estonia may increase the risks of violence, which endangers the safety of spectators and other participants.

In conclusion, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Estonia taking into account the position of Government of the Republic of Estonia invites all event organisers (including sport event) to show their full support to Ukraine, condemn Russia's massive military attack on Ukraine in the strongest terms and encourage also organizers not to allow Russian or Belarusian athletes and teams to take part of the international competition held in Estonia so called neutral athlete.

Since March 10, 2022, Estonia stopped issuing tourist visas to Russians and Belarusians and since August 18, 2022, all citizens of the Russian Federation who have valid visas for tourism and business travel purposes, including participation in sports competition or cultural event in Estonia, were prohibited from entering Estonia.

Yours sincerely,


Heidi Purga
Minister