



Council of the  
European Union

Brussels, 10 May 2023  
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SPORT 16

#### INFORMATION NOTE

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From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Council

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Subject: Protecting the rights of Ukrainian athletes in international sport events held  
in the European Union  
*- Information from the Lithuanian delegation*

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Delegations will find attached an information note from the Lithuanian delegation on the above subject, which has been put on the agenda under ‘Any other business’ of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting of 15-16 May 2023.

**Protecting the rights of Ukrainian athletes  
in international sport events held in the European Union**

*Information from the Lithuanian delegation*

The EU Sport Council policy debate, held on May 15, 2023, under the Swedish Presidency, highlights the importance of guaranteeing respect for human rights when organizing major international sport events.

It is evident that international sport organizations that have allowed aggressors, namely Russia and its ally Belarus, to participate in their competitions have disregarded the human rights of Ukrainian athletes.

Amidst Russia's war of aggression, we must protect the human rights of the Ukrainian athletes, ensuring that their dignity, values, mental health are safeguarded, as well as protecting their right to participate in sports without hindrance. We must also respect the rights of a large majority of athletes who do not wish to participate in international sports events with representatives of aggressors.

Our firm position on the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in the competitions has not changed and we are convinced that national sports federations and athletes should take more active steps. We should encourage them to sign joint declarations against the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in international sport competitions and distribute these declarations to their international organizations and the International Olympic Committee; as well as to invite them to express their position in sport forums and assemblies.

Our aim is to ensure that respect for human rights is upheld in all international sport events organized worldwide. However, we must first set an example by ensuring that human rights are respected in international sport events held in the European Union.

In response to decisions made by international sports organizations that support aggressors, some EU member states have cancelled events that allow the participation of Russian and Belarussian athletes in their countries. While this is an extreme measure, we have to do everything in our power to prevent aggressors from being represented in international sport competitions and organizations.

Therefore, we invite the Member States of the European Union to speak out and declare that athletes and their staff who support aggressors, namely Russia and Belarus, must not participate in international competitions until Russia withdraws from Ukraine and the perpetrators of this war are held accountable. We must make our position and message clear: aggressor athletes and their staff are not welcome in international sport events in the European Union.

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