European Parliament

To:

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

Kaja Kallas, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission

Glenn Micallef, Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport

Franz Reindl, President of the International Ice Hockey Federation

Copy: Governments of EU Member States and host countries of the affected IIHF championships

Brussels, Belgium
30 October 2026

Dear President von der Leyen,

Dear High Representative Kallas,

Dear Commissioner Micallef,

Dear President Reindl,

On 30 October, the Court of Arbitration for Sport overturned the IIHF decisions excluding Russian teams from championships in the 2026/27 season, citing insufficient evidence for the federation's security assessment. Russia's Sports Minister immediately claimed the decision as a victory. Moscow understands perfectly well the political value of what it has obtained. Europe must demonstrate equal clarity.

We consider this outcome profoundly wrong.

It opens a route to the international rehabilitation of the Russian state while that state continues its war of aggression against Ukraine. Its consequences extend well beyond the jurisdiction and reasoning of a sporting tribunal.

Russia has secured a favourable ruling. It has done nothing to earn its rehabilitation.

The Kremlin seeks the ordinary privileges of international life alongside the extraordinary licence it claims to destroy a neighbouring country. Restoring its place in international competition helps Moscow present aggression as a disagreement whose consequences eventually expire. Ukrainian athletes and their families have no such luxury.

The IIHF has expressed its disappointment and reaffirmed its concerns. We share those concerns and urge a coordinated response from the federation, European institutions and national governments, each acting within their responsibilities.

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First, *we call on the IIHF to examine every lawful avenue for maintaining Russia's exclusion, including the scope for further decisions on legally sound and properly evidenced grounds. The reported ruling leaves national symbols and other organisational consequences unresolved. We urge the federation to resist the restoration of Russian flags, anthems and official state representation, and to clarify publicly the discretion it retains.*

Second, *we call on the Commission and High Representative to bring forward targeted sanctions proposals for the Council's consideration against sporting officials and entities that materially support Russia's aggression or its state propaganda apparatus, wherever the relevant criteria are met. Where existing instruments leave genuine gaps, we expect proposals to close them. A missing legal instrument is a reason to legislate, rather than an excuse for inaction.*

Third, *we ask the Commission to review EU grants, partnerships and institutional support involving sporting bodies that facilitate Russia's official return. This should include withholding support where legally justified and strengthening conditions for future funding. European taxpayers should not finance the rehabilitation of a state whose aggression Europe is working to defeat.*

Fourth, *we urge host governments to coordinate their use of lawful visa, entry and public-support measures, with the required individual assessments and legal safeguards. Sporting eligibility does not itself confer a right of entry. A common approach, developed with Ukraine, Canada and other like-minded partners, would prevent Moscow from exploiting differences between national responses.*

The autonomy of sport carries responsibilities. It cannot require democratic governments to finance, facilitate or confer political legitimacy on every outcome produced within sporting arbitration.

Nor can Europe sustain a policy that isolates Russia in its declarations while restoring the privileges Moscow values in practice. That contradiction has a beneficiary. The Kremlin will use every concession to argue that the world is learning to live with its war.

We urgently ask for a joint response, setting out the legal and policy options under consideration, and actions to take before Russian participation is implemented in the affected championships.

Russia is counting on consequences becoming temporary while its aggression continues. European institutions, governments and sporting authorities must prove that calculation wrong.

Yours sincerely,

MEP Rihards Kols, ECR, Latvia

MEP Mika Aaltola, EPP, Finland

MEP Roberts Zīle, ECR, Latvia

MEP Karin Karlsbro, Renew, Sweden

MEP Dainius Žalimas, Renew, Lithuania

MEP Jussi Saramo, The Left, Finland

MEP Ivars Ījabs, Renew, Latvia

MEP Mārtiņš Staķis, Greens, Latvia

MEP Pekka Toveri, EPP, Finland

MEP Kosma Zlotowski, ECR, Poland

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MEP Anna-Maja Henriksson, Renew, Finland

MEP Lucia Yar, Renew, Slovakia

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