



LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS ŠVIETIMO, MOKSLO IR SPORTO MINISTERIJA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND SPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

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Vilnius, Lithuania

**RE: PARTICIPATION OF RUSSIAN AND BELORUSIAN ATHLETES IN SPORTS
EVENTS**

Dear President, dear Council Members,

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania strongly condemns Russia's ongoing military aggression against Ukraine complicity in these actions, which grossly violate international law and fundamental human rights.

As a result, the Ministry has issued an official recommendation (Ref. No. SR-600, dated 13 February 2023), which calls on all Lithuanian sports federations and event organizers to **deny participation to athletes and other representatives from the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus in any high-level sports competitions held in Lithuania**—including those competing under a so-called *neutral status*.

This recommendation is based on the following principles:

1. **No distinction can be made** between athletes competing under national symbols and those competing under a neutral flag, when such individuals often benefit from the support of their respective governments, including state funding and training infrastructure.
2. Allowing participation of these athletes in events hosted in Lithuania would **contradict the fundamental values of sport** and send a misleading signal of normalization amid continued acts of aggression.
3. **Lithuanian sports federations that do not comply with this recommendation will be ineligible for public funding** for the organization of high-performance sports competitions in Lithuania.

These principles are fully supported by the Lithuanian sports community, as reflected in a joint declaration co-signed by national sports federations and the Ministry. We believe that sport cannot be used as a tool for propaganda by regimes that commit acts of war and violate international norms.

With this letter, we would also like to inform you that the *Regulations on the Financing of International High-Performance Sport Competition Projects* (hereinafter referred to as *the Regulations*), approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania by Order No. V-267 on 7 March 2023, apply to organizers who request state budget funds for hosting international sport events in Lithuania. If a sports federation receives state budget funding under *the Regulations*, it must comply with all related requirements, including the following:

- **Nationals of the Russian Federation and/or the Republic of Belarus representing their respective countries shall not be invited to or allowed to participate in competitions funded under *the Regulations* (Item 5.7).**
- **For Russian and Belarusian citizens participating in competitions funded under *the Regulations* who do not fall under Item 5.7, a signed free-form declaration must be submitted along with their application (license). This applies to high-performance sports coaches, athletes, and athlete support personnel. **The declaration must express a demand for an end to the war in Ukraine, condemn terrorism and aggression in Ukraine, and reject the policies pursued by Russia and Belarus (Item 5.8).****

Furthermore, it is important to know that the *Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Restrictive Measures in Connection with Military Aggression Against Ukraine* came into force on 3 May 2023. Under this law, the acceptance of visa applications from Russian and Belarusian citizens by Lithuanian visa services abroad is suspended. There are no exceptions in this law for issuing visas to Russian and Belarusian citizens wishing to participate in international sport competitions in Lithuania. Additionally, please note that under this law, **Russian citizens holding Schengen visas issued by other countries may be denied entry into Lithuania**, except in specific cases outlined in the legislation.

The participation of athletes from aggressor countries, Russia and Belarus, in sporting competitions is a matter of significant public concern and media scrutiny. We believe that allowing such participation could also negatively impact the federation's potential sponsorship opportunities.

Given these circumstances and the security risks involved, we **respectfully ask you** to take all necessary measures **to ensure that athletes from Russia and Belarus do not compete in Lithuania** regardless of their declared status.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and invite your cooperation in upholding the ethical and legal standards expected from the international sporting community.

Yours sincerely,
Giedrius Grybauskas
Vice minister of Education, Science and Sport

C.C. Lithuanian Orienteering Sport Federation