



The President
Pascal Tesch
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Call for dialogue

An open Letter from the Bureau of the European Fencing Confederation (EFC) to the FIE Leadership

The Bureau of the European Fencing Confederation (EFC) addresses this open letter to reaffirm its unwavering commitment to the values of peace, fairness, and unity within our sport. At this pivotal moment, we wish to clarify our position on recent developments and ongoing challenges facing the fencing community.

This letter is a reaction to the latest publications of the Fédération Internationale d'Escrime (FIE) and the press release claiming that "fencing chooses peace."

We have chosen the format of an open letter to clearly and transparently stress that we stand ready for a collaborative — not imposed or dictated — open and fair negotiation to find acceptable compromises. Unfortunately, our repeated calls for such dialogue have, in the past, been either unheard or ignored.

Russia's Status in the European Zone

It must be understood that the only zone directly impacted by Russia's actions is the European one. Yet, not once has Europe been consulted in order to make any informed decisions. The Russian Fencing Federation remains suspended as a member of the EFC due to the Russian National Olympic Committee's unlawful incorporation of Ukrainian clubs into its system — a direct violation of international sporting norms and the sovereignty of Ukrainian sport that also led to the suspension of the Russian Olympic Committee by the International Olympic Committee, IOC.

Commitment to Peace and Unity

The EFC fully supports the FIE's stated mission to foster peace through sport and recognizes the potential of fencing as a bridge between divided communities. We urge the FIE to take concrete steps toward truly uniting the global fencing family, ensuring that all actions are inclusive and respectful of all member federations. This unity must begin with genuine dialogue and the pursuit of mutually acceptable compromises.

We need to talk with one another, not about the other.



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Support for IOC Recommendations

The EFC unequivocally supports the recommendations of the International Olympic Committee, which provide a clear and principled framework for the participation of athletes in the context of ongoing conflict. We stress that adherence to these recommendations is essential for the credibility and integrity of our sport at both the European and global levels.

Concerns Regarding Verification and Independence

The EFC has significant concerns about the independence of any in-house verification processes used to determine athlete eligibility or neutrality. We question whether such internal mechanisms can truly meet the standards of impartiality and transparency required by the IOC recommendations. We call for robust, third-party oversight to ensure that all procedures are genuinely independent and trustworthy.

Position on AIN and Team Participation

The EFC recognizes the Athlete Individual Neutral (AIN) status as a potential vector for peace and dialogue within sport. However, we strongly oppose any attempt to circumvent the IOC's position that "a group of AIN is not a team." The formation of teams under the AIN banner undermines the very principles of neutrality and non-representation that the status is meant to uphold.

Unity Through Adherence to International Norms

The EFC questions how any position or policy that deviates from the accepted IOC recommendations can serve to unite the world of fencing. True unity can only be achieved through respect for internationally recognized standards and the voices of all affected communities.



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Conclusion

The EFC remains steadfast in its dedication to upholding the values of integrity, fairness, and solidarity in fencing. We call upon the FIE and all international partners to: Finally accept our call for fair dialogue, considering Europe's unique position in this matter. Ensure that all verification processes are independent and transparent. Adhere strictly to IOC recommendations regarding athlete participation and neutrality.

Foster genuine unity by respecting the rights and experiences of all athletes, especially those affected by conflict.

We stand ready to work collaboratively towards a future where fencing is a true symbol of peace and international cooperation.

On behalf of the bureau of the EFC

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Pascal Tesch', with a stylized flourish extending from the end of the name.

Pascal Tesch
President
European Fencing Confederation